

China

T O U R I S M

TIBET  SPECIAL

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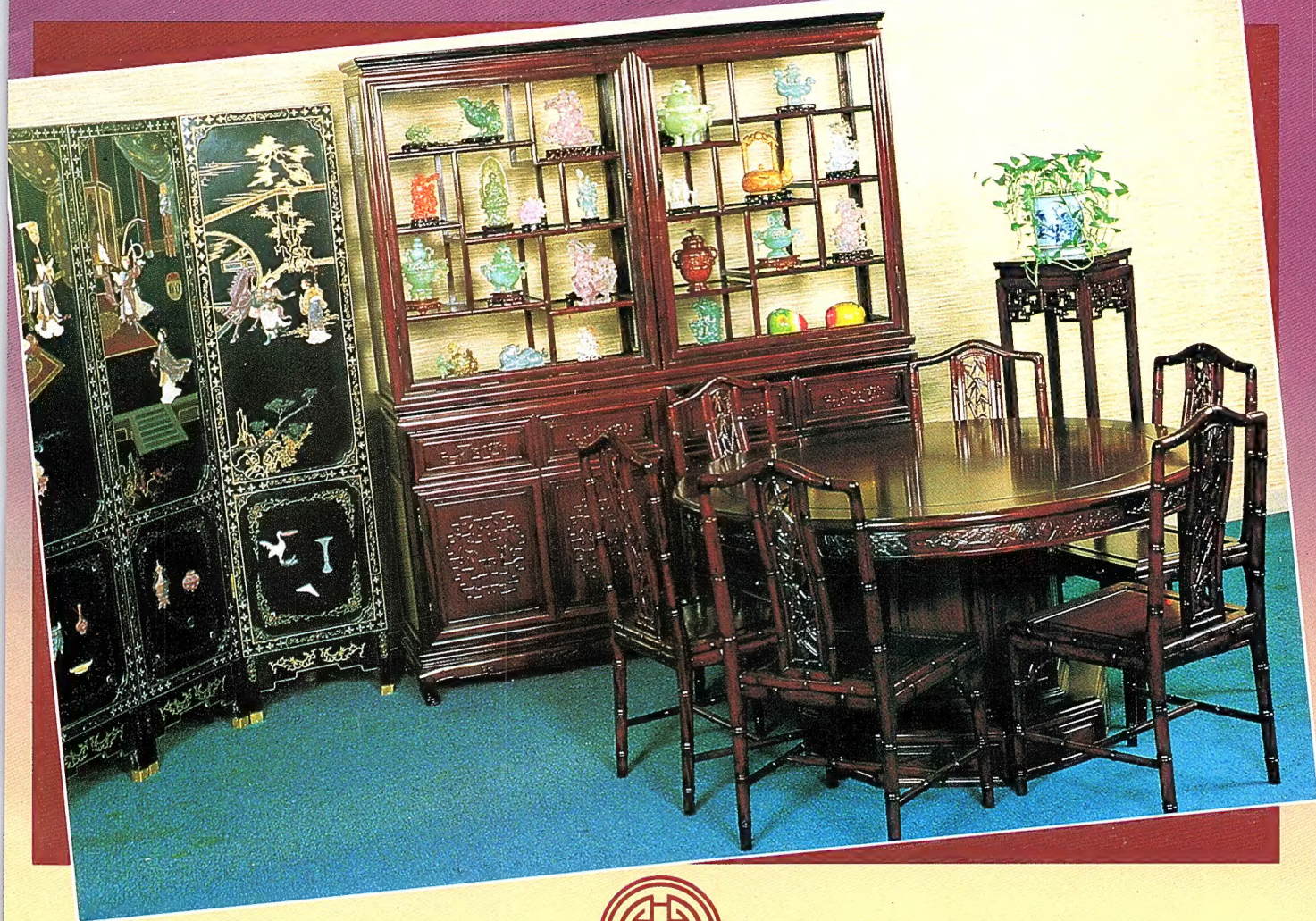
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EDITORIAL

Eternal Land of Snows

Its reputation as a land of mystics with strange powers, a land where the bare bones of the landscape are counterbalanced by an extraordinarily rich life of the spirit, has been given further substance by Tibet's (continuing) isolation. Yet its progress is followed with avid interest by people all over the world. Whether this has to do with the charisma of its spiritual leaders, or with the general vagaries of its history, we leave to our readers to decide.

Since Tibet is dubbed the 'Roof of the World', it seems fitting that it was its chain of Himalayan giants which forced the first tentative opening-up to the outside world. In 1980, nine peaks were declared 'open' to foreign mountaineers (followed by another twelve in 1986). But foreign travellers in general were only admitted into Tibet in 1984. Since then, there has been a gradual relaxation of bans on the major religious festivals such as the Monlam Festival, which was celebrated in Lhasa in 1987 after a twenty-year hiatus.

However, as readers will be aware, the fledgling tourism industry in Tibet had its wings clipped by the 1988 official decision to ban entry to individual foreign travellers. Still, package tours are not affected, and travellers willing to form themselves into minimum groups of three are also eligible to enter; this can usually be arranged in Chengdu, the present gateway to Tibet for almost all foreign visitors. At certain times of year, it is possible to book overland trips to Lhasa through travel agents in Kathmandu, the Nepalese capital.

In this issue we concentrate on the geographical and administrative divisions of this immense area, almost as large as Western Europe, with particular reference to places associated with key developments in Tibetan history. We hope you enjoy our exploration of a region which, despite all its problems, represents one of the world's great travel experiences.

And, please, don't forget your entries for our Grand Photo Contest!

Photo by Che Fu and Che Gang



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Front cover: Prayer-flags flutter in the wind over Lhasa (by Che Gang)



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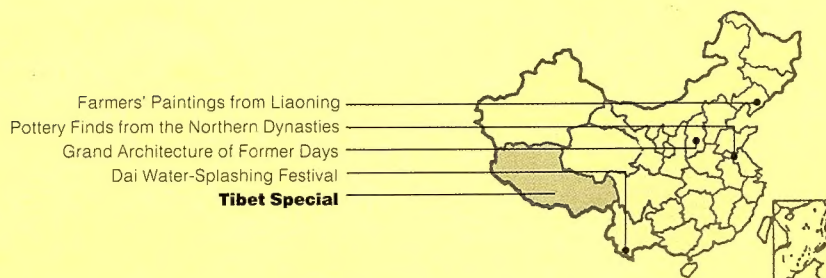
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The World's Rooftop

Present-day Tibet covers an area of 1.2 million square kilometres, and has a population of something approaching two million Tibetans, a disputed number of Han Chinese, and a sprinkling of other minorities – Lhoba, Moinba, Naxi, Hui, Nu and Drung. There are also Tibetans living in many other parts of China, major concentrations being found in Sichuan, Gansu, Qinghai and Yunnan in Tibetan autonomous prefectures and counties. In all, there are said to be around four million Tibetans in China, and anything up to one million others living in India, Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim and Kashmir.



THE SOUTH

South of the Gangdisê and Nyainqên-tanglha Ranges lie Tibet's southern valleys, watered by the Yarlung Zangbo. The Xigazê District centres on Xigazê, the political and religious centre of Back Tibet.

THE WEST

Ngari District has been dubbed the 'roof of the roof of the world'. This high, cold almost denuded plateau hides some of the most sacred sites in Tibet, if not Asia. Zanda County contains ruins of the kingdom of Guge, where the Buddhist faith was revived in the tenth century.





THE CENTRAL ZONE

Tibet is centred on the Yarlung Valley, the cradle of Tibetan civilization, and on Lhasa, the capital, which contains many monuments to Tibet's history. Sites of great antiquity are to be found in Shannan District on the south bank of the Yarlung angbo.

THE NORTH

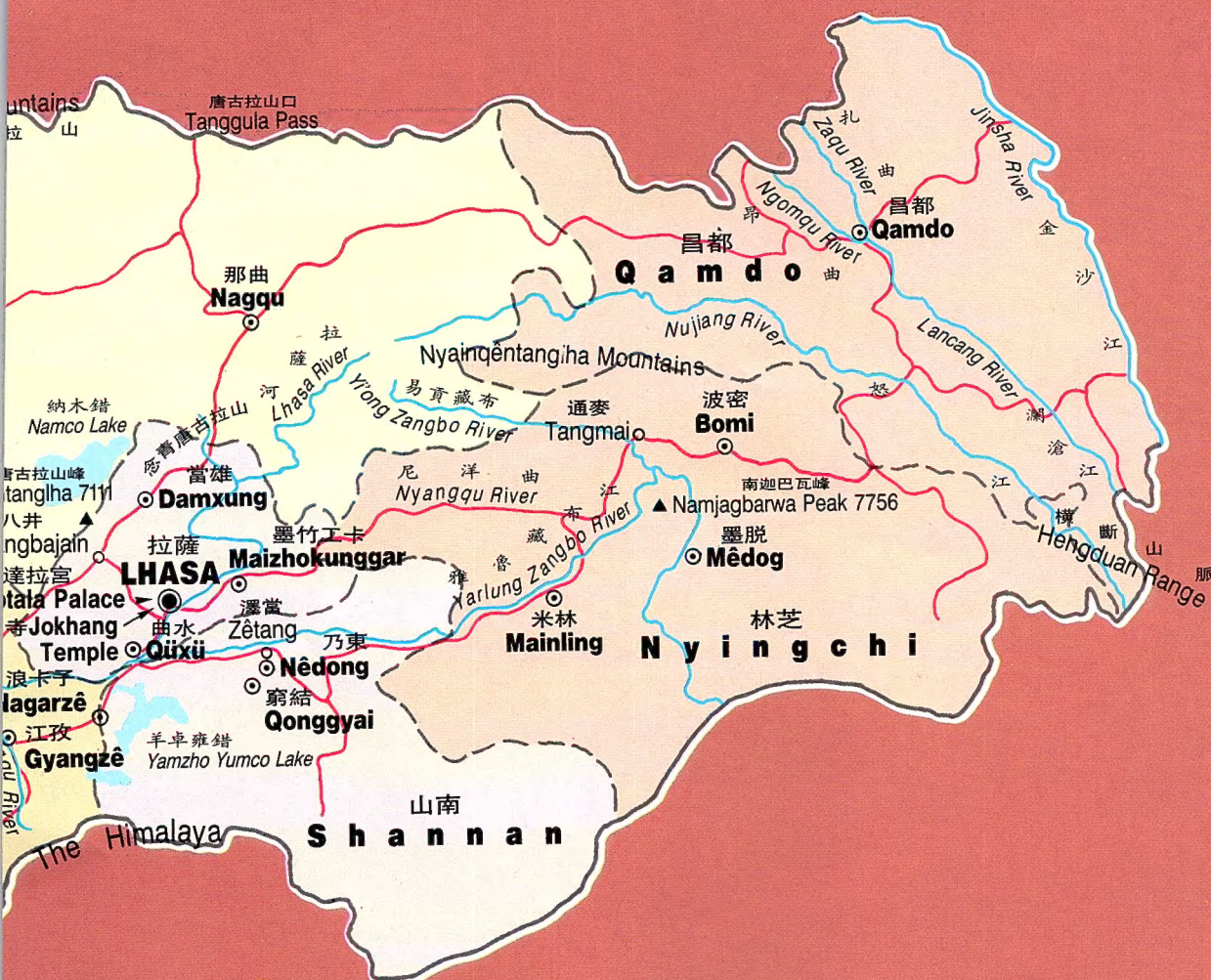
The administrative districts of Nagqu and Ngari lie on the Qiangtang, the great northern plateau which accounts for over forty percent of Tibet's land mass. These are pastoral areas where yaks, sheep, goats and horses far outnumber the scattered human population.

THE EAST

Bordering on Qinghai, Sichuan, Yunnan, India and Burma, eastern Tibet falls under the administration of Qamdo District. The steep mountains and river gorges of the Hengduan Range give way further west to subtropical forests and fertile farmlands.



Kunlun Range





Qamdo and Its Colourful

Inhabitants

PHOTOS BY CHE FU &
CHE GANG

ARTICLE BY LING FENG

Covering an area of around 300,000 square kilometres, Qamdo District in eastern Tibet is furrowed by a trio of great rivers. These are the Nujiang, the upper course of the Salween of Burma, the Lancang, further south known as the Mekong, and the Jinsha, which is none other than the headwaters of the Yangtse. They follow almost parallel courses between the Baxoila, Taniantaweng and Ningjing Mountains in the mighty Hengduan Range, gouging out deep trenches as they flow from north to south.

Although it does not actually traverse Qamdo District, another river has a major influence on its climate. This is the Yarlung Zangbo which, after flowing east across much of lower Tibet, suddenly loops back on itself close to the lowest point in Tibet. This river is the upper course of India's Brahmaputra, and it opens up this southeastern corner of Tibet to the warm, moisture-bearing monsoon winds from the Indian Ocean.

Photo by Che Fu



Because of the greater rainfall and the lower altitude, the southern part of Qamdo District has an abundance of trees and plants such as rhododendrons, azaleas, bamboos, magnolias, oaks, even tea. The animal life too is much richer than in the rest of Tibet. Forestry is particularly important around Zayü (as well as in Nyingchi and Médog in neighbouring Lhasa District), where thick tropical forests cover ninety percent of the land. Protected from the winds from the north by very high mountains and with a mild climate throughout the year, Zayü can even grow rice.

Qamdo District is bordered to the north by the Bayan Har Mountains and Qinghai. To the east lies Sichuan, to the south India, Burma and Yunnan. Chinese records show that this region was already known as Kham by the time of the Han dynasty (206 B.C.–A.D. 220). In the seventh century it was conquered by the expanding Tibetan kingdom of Tubo, based in central Tibet. On the dissolution of that dynasty with the death of King Lang Darma, Tibet was again split up between local rulers and tribal leaders. In the thirteenth century the Sakya Dynasty became the ruler of Tibet, and thus of Kham. During the Qing dynasty, Emperor Kangxi's general presented diplomas and seals inscribed in Manchu, Mongolian and Tibetan to the two leading abbots of the region, authorizing them to exercise religious and political power over Kham.

In Tibetan, Qamdo means 'where the waters meet'. The town is located at an altitude of 3,200 metres above sea-level at the confluence of the rivers Zaku and Ngomqu, which here form the River Lancang. The third largest city in Tibet today, the political, economic and cultural centre of the district, it is built in a strategic position against a backdrop of imposing mountains looking down over a flat, winding valley.

The famous lamasery of Jampaling or Jiangbaling is set on a hill behind the old part of the town. It was founded in 1473 by followers of Tsong Khapa (1357–1419), the founder of the Yellow Sect of Tibetan Buddhism. This was the largest monastery in Kham and, at one time, had a community of 2,500 monks and ruled 130 subordinate monasteries in the surrounding areas. Its main relic is a statue of the Jampa Buddha (Buddha of the Future), which gives it its name.

The town is flourishing, its shops, hotels, inns and government offices pulling in the people from the surrounding areas. In its streets, you see a constant to and fro of people of sundry ethnic backgrounds, but especially Tibetans.

Both men and women still generally adhere to traditional Tibetan dress. They wear



Photo by Arong





Photo by Zaxi Dunzhu



the *chuba* — a long, loose robe with long sleeves which can double as a sort of sleeping bag at night. The men wear it belted at the waist and pulled up high to form a large pouch, useful for carrying and storing all kinds of things. The *chuba* is usually made from woollen fabric or felt, except for the northern herdsmen's sheepskin robes.

The Tibetans of Qamdo District like fox-fur hats. However, you also see many fashionable young people wearing felt hats. A Khampa may even perch a felt hat over his mounds of coiled hair!

These Khampa are certainly striking. They are the native tribespeople of Kham, who in past centuries enjoyed a formidable reputation as fighters and bandits. Khampa men in particular are tall, 1.8 metres on average, and strongly built, and their hair decoration would catch the eye anywhere. They wear their hair in a thick pigtail attached to long strands of red yarn, twisted and coiled around the head and down over one ear. The red tassels are known as 'hero's knots'. The Khampas certainly look heroic as they stride boldly down the street, a sharp knife tucked in their belt, red tassels bobbing on their shoulder.

Qamdo women also decorate their hair with red threads, but intertwine them with turquoise, coral, agate and other semi-precious stones. Tibetan women adore jewellery; the more and the larger, the better. Apart from the intrinsic beauty of gold, silver and gems, they wear them as status symbols in ear-rings, necklaces, bracelets, prayer-beads, rings, pendants and belts. It is said that each of these has a hidden meaning. For instance, spiral rings and ear-rings symbolize the happiness of family reunion. A necklace of amber (symbolizing boys) and coral (girls) beads strung alternately with a large ivory bead in the middle (the parents) means that family members rely on each other, sharing weal and woe. Elaborate jewellery may well represent a family's total liquid assets. Some local families hold a 'treasure-displaying' event every year. Gold articles or items inlaid with gold such as saddles, stirrups, personal jewellery and so on, are put on public display. The value of some of these collections can reach 500,000 to 600,000 yuan.

In the streets of Qamdo you also come across Tibetans dressed in a completely different style, with stand-up collars and rich embroidery on the front of the robe. These are not local people; they come from the district of Shannan, 'south of the mountains'. At festival times, when Tibetans from all around pour in to share in the general excitement and watch popular dances and folk operas, if you look closely, you can even see variations in the design of the masks used by opera performers from different localities.



Translated by Gu Weizhou

The Qiangt



ng: Tibet's Great Northern

Plateau

PHOTOS BY CHE GANG
& CHE FU

ARTICLE BY DU KEDAO

In Tibetan, Qiangtang means 'Northern Grassland' or 'Northern Plateau'. The forbidding expanse of the Qiangtang — lying at an average of 4,500 metres above sea-level — covers about 500,000 square kilometres, forty percent of present-day Tibet. Its northern limit is the Kunlun Range, its southern the Gangdisê and Nyainqêntanglha Mountains. In the east it extends as far as the River Nujiang; in the west it borders on Kashmir.

Temperatures average around minus 5–6°C and can sink to as much as minus 30–40°C. Winter lasts for eight to nine months of the year. One can readily understand that even the most basic types of grasses have a hard time surviving, let alone thriving, under such conditions.

At the time of the Tang dynasty (618–907) a post road ran via Nagqu between Xining (now capital of Qinghai) and Zhanpu (now Maizhokunggar, a town around seventy kilometres east of Lhasa), traversing just the southeastern corner of the Qiangtang. This road, which had twenty-three courier staging posts, remained virtually unchanged up until Qing times. Since what towns and settlements the Qiangtang has are clustered around its southern and eastern fringes, the region is still little visited by outsiders although now, with the aid of aerial photography, it is no longer necessary to actually brave its harshness in person to experience it.





Unlike the open Hulun Buir Grassland of Inner Mongolia, this is not absolutely flat steppe country. The Qiangtang undulates enough to block views of the horizon, permitting only intermittent glimpses of snow-capped peaks. The plateau consists of large basins separated by ranges of hills. More than one thousand lakes or co — most of them salt lakes — dot the centres of the basins. The lakes vary widely in size; the largest are huge, more than one thousand square kilometres in area.

Incongruously, in view of the generally sub-zero temperatures, there are also a large number of hot springs scattered on the Qiangtang. Their origin can be traced back four or five million years to when two continental plates — the Eurasian and the Indian — collided, trapping huge quantities of red-hot magma in the Earth's crust.

The subterranean water heated by the magma emerges in different ways. In some places it shoots out in the form of a geyser, in others it bubbles out like any other spring. There are also hot streams, hot lakes and boiling mud springs. More than three hundred geothermal spots have so far been identified on the plateau. Apart from being a boon to the Tibetans of the region, like the hot spring only two kilometres outside Nagqu which emerges at 60–70°C all year round, this important natural resource is also being utilized to produce electricity and heat huge greenhouses at Yangbajain, north of Lhasa.

Since time immemorial the nomads of northern Tibet have been on the move from one grazing ground to another, making a living from their herds. The Qiangtang's pasturelands are in fact one of China's major pastoral areas. The herdsmen pitch their tents at a lower elevation or in a more sheltered position to wait out the winter. When spring comes and the pastures turn green, they move their tents and their herds up to the higher and more exposed sites for the summer, moving back down gradually. Sometimes they change their pitch every three or four days, sometimes they change it every month, depending on the condition of the grass. The health and well-being of their animals is all-important. The sight of hundreds, even thousands, of fine yak, horses, goats and sheep moving across the treeless grassland gives them enormous satisfaction.

Their herds and flocks provide nomad families with almost everything they need. They eat yak meat and mutton, and use yak's milk to make yoghurt and butter. They use dried yak dung and sheep droppings as fuel for their cooking fires. Their voluminous robes are made from sheepskin, their boots often from yak hide. Their tents are made from yak hide or of felt made from yak hair and they weave

Tibetans 'rock-lifting' near Nagqu (1, by Zhong Guohua), showing off a new bag decorated with much-prized shells (2), and enjoying the luxury of a hot spring (3, by Zheng Shiming).



2



3



blankets from the wool of their animals to keep them warm at night. The men make their snuff bottles from yak horns and the women wash their face in sheep's milk at New Year as well as using butter as a 'face cream' to prevent chapping. Even nomad children's toys are made from animal bones. The only essentials which have to be brought in from outside are tea and *zanba* (barley flour).

Festivals provide the best opportunity for the scarce and scattered population to meet and enjoy themselves in traditional style. For example horse-racing — originating from a memorial ceremony for a deceased king of Gyangzê of Back Tibet held by his grandson in 1408 — takes place outside Nagqu, the main town of the Qiangtang, at the end of July or in early August every year. There is a similar gathering at Damxung, the only town of any size between Nagqu and Yangbajain.

This meeting offers a number of other entertainments, including a 'rock-lifting' competition — the local version of weight-lifting. The competitors (men only) must each in turn lift a rock in the centre of a roughly drawn circle. A heavier rock is substituted after each round, up to a maximum of 140 kilos.

By comparison, the *guoxie* dance — popular in many rural areas of Tibet — is a much more general affair. Men and women alike dance hand in hand in one or two circles. The master of ceremonies shouts '*xiu, xiu, xiu, xiu*' and the participants start to dance to a two/four beat stamping their feet to mark the rhythm since there is not usually any instrumental accompaniment.

West and north of Nagqu lies the real 'no-man's land'. The vast empty heart of the Qiangtang where the districts of Ngari and Nagqu meet is twice as large as Zhejiang Province. Truck drivers sometimes tell of how, driving across the Qiangtang for a month, they encountered only a few nomads on horseback. All they saw otherwise were wild animals: antelopes, donkeys, yaks and marmots.

They say they felt the animals were challenging them to a race. According to some drivers, the Tibetan antelope can reach a speed of more than two hundred kilometres per hour. Whether this is an exaggeration or not, this species does have a sort of pouch on either side of its belly. When it runs, the pouches bulge with air, creating the impression that the animal is floating, and give it extra speed.

The wild yak, incredibly hardy with its long, thick coat and weighing up to one ton, is untroubled by motor vehicles and will amble along blocking the road for ages, however much the driver toots his horn. As for the marmot, Tibetan legend has it that one in a thousand marmots is very intelligent and uses the Tibetans' butter lamps to light its burrow!

Translated by Anne Yan

Gathering for a guoxie dance near Damxung
(1, by Zhong Guohua). The Giangtang, where
the protected marmot thrives (2), becomes
one vast pasture in the summer (3).



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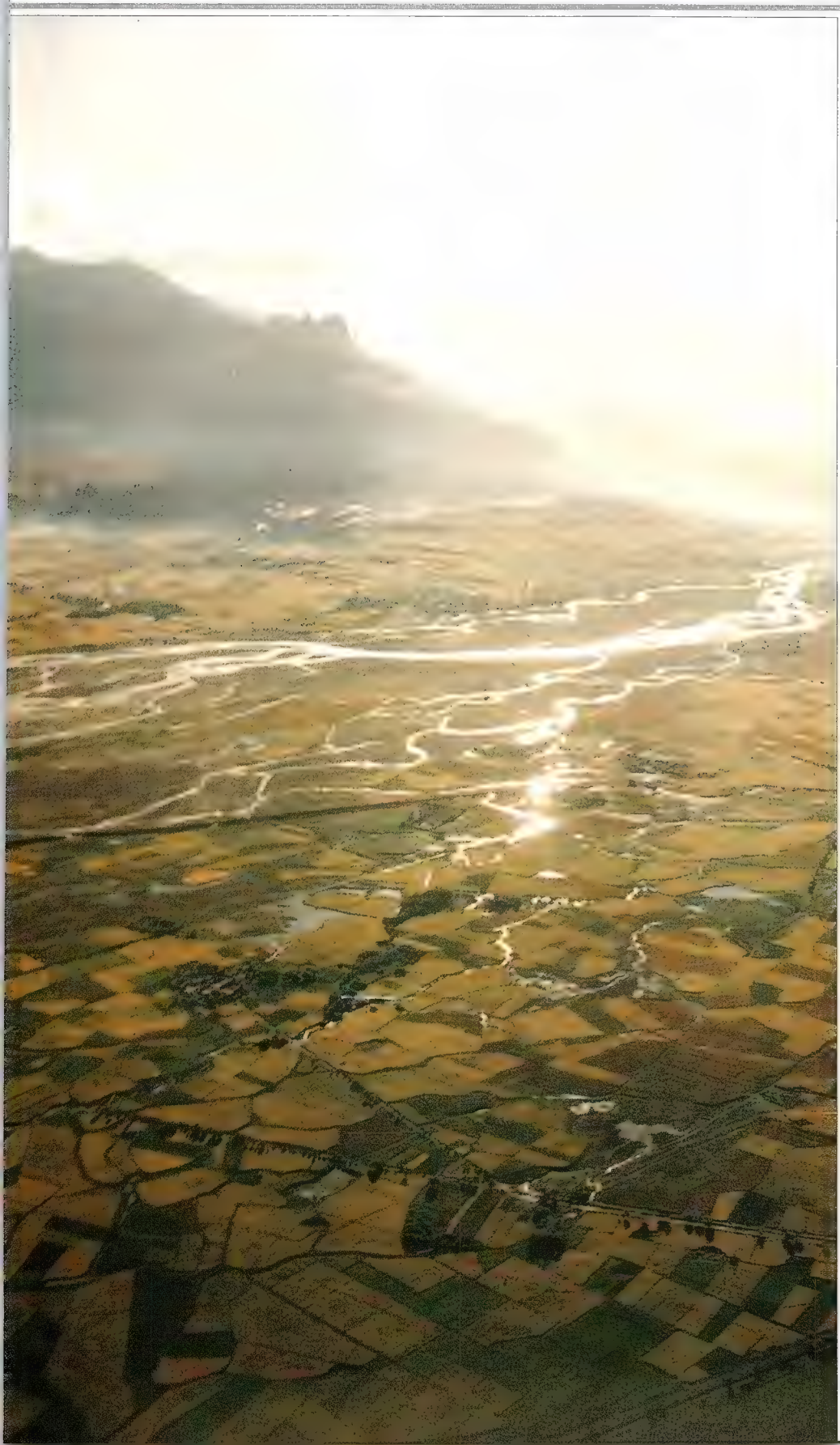
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the Tibetans – Lhasa and the South



ARTICLE BY DU KEDAO

The Lhasa River, which rises to the east of Lake Namco south of the Nyainqêntanglha Mountains, flows past the city of Lhasa to merge with the Yarlung Zangbo near Qûxû.

The valley where the rivers meet is known as the Yarlung Valley or the South Tibetan Plain, and it has played a crucial role in the history of the Tibetan people. Lhasa, Tibet's capital and the seat of the Dalai Lamas, sits in the northern part of this plain. The southern part is now the administrative district of Shannan (literally, 'south of the mountains'), and it was here that the ancestors of the Tibetans are said to have originated.

Photo by Che Fu



Lhasa means 'holy city' in Tibetan. It has long been a major target of pilgrimage for Tibetan Buddhists. In and around the city one finds many sacred sites such as the Jokhang Temple, the monasteries of Ganden, Drepung and Sera — the past known as the 'three pillars of the state' and the Potala Palace.

The Jokhang Temple is located at the heart of the old town, the religious and geographical centre of Lhasa. The four-storey main hall is surmounted by a golden roof decorated with gilt-bronze dragons, lions, phoenix and other birds. In one of the many chapels on the ground floor stands the famous life-sized gilt-bronze statue of the Buddha Sakyamuni as a twelve-year-old, the main focus of worship for devotees from all corners of Tibet. Yet, despite its Tibetan characteristics, with a certain Indian and Nepalese influence, the complex also contains architectural features from the Chinese Tang dynasty.

The reason for this lies in history. After Songtsan Gambo (reign dates 629–650), the thirty-third ruler of the Tubo tribe, unified Tibet under the Tubo Kingdom, he sent an envoy to the Tang court at Chang'an (present-day Xi'an, Shaanxi) to request the hand in marriage of the emperor's daughter, Wencheng. For reasons of diplomacy, the princess — a devout Buddhist — was sent to Tibet in 641.

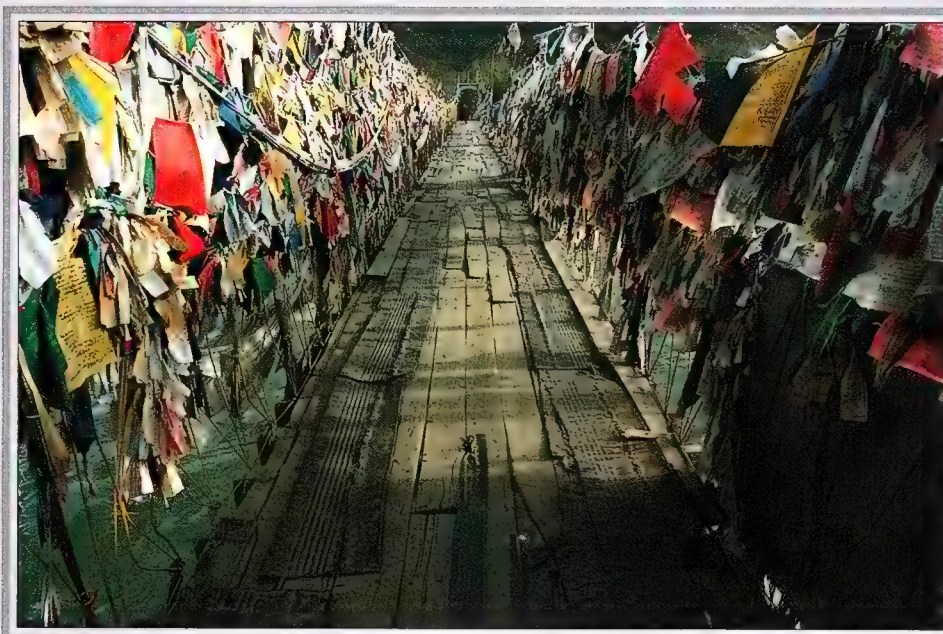
Legend has it that, on her arrival, the princess studied the constellations and local topography and concluded that Tibet was shaped like

a reclining female Rakshasa (a cannibalistic demon capable of assuming human form). This holy place, she said, must be built to subdue the demon or the king and his power would be endangered. So Songtsan Gambo had the temple built in 648, right over the 'heart' of the Rakshasa. In it Princess Wencheng housed the revered statue of Sakyamuni she had brought with her all the way from Chang'an.

Also influenced by another of his wives, the Nepalese princess Tritsun, again a practising Buddhist — the king grew ever more interested in this religion. He even had a script devised for Tibetan, based on the Sanskrit or perhaps Kashmiri script, so that the Buddhist scriptures could be translated.

New Year Rituals

The annual Monlam or Great Prayer Festival inaugurated by Tsong Khapa (1357–1419), the reformer and founder of the Gelugpa or Yellow Sect, takes place in the courtyard of the Jokhang Temple now that it has been reinstated. It used to last for three weeks. Now, from the seventh to the fifteenth day of the first month of the Tibetan calendar, monks and lamas from



2 **Lamas sound ritual conches during the Monlam Festival (1), while the Xodoin Festival sees Tibetan opera performed in Norbu Lingka Park (3) (1 and 3 by Che Fu & Che Gang). An iron chain bridge across the Lhasa River festooned with prayer-flags (2, by Zhou Guohua).**







2



3

Drepung and Sera gather here, their dark-red robes and yellow hats the predominant colours. The heavier, more ornate robes worn by the senior lamas add a note of splendour.

But even for ordinary residents of Lhasa, special occasions such as the new year offer excitement and time-honoured rituals. On New Year's Eve, families get together to eat *zanba* (the barley flour which, mixed with butter tea, forms a dietary staple). They mix the leftovers with the household rubbish, which they dump in a bonfire at the crossroads. Apart from burning the rubbish, the fire is also regarded as a symbol of expelling demons.

Having thoroughly cleaned their homes inside and out, people rise extremely early on New Year's Day and paint a swastika with lime above and on the ground in front of their front door as a symbol of good luck and long life. When the cock crows for the first time, they dash to the nearest well, vying with each other to draw the first pail of water of the new year, since they believe that it is sacred.

The third or fifth day of the new year is chosen for the ceremony of replacing the prayer-flags. Hung on willows or poplars, these are narrow strips of red, white, blue, green or yellow cloth inscribed with the Buddhist scriptures. The five colours represent respectively the sun, clouds, sky, water and earth. When the new prayer-flags are in place, family members, old and young, throw a handful of *zanba* skywards as a libation to the gods.

The Sublime Potala

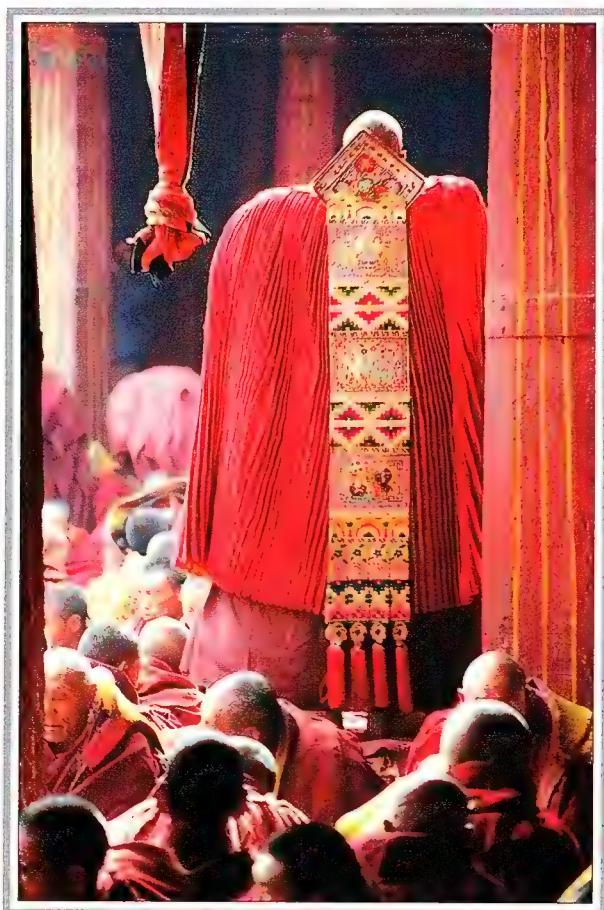
The Potala is perhaps the symbol of Tibet. Located on Marpori (Red Hill), it is one of the architectural wonders of the world. The earliest structure was a royal palace and fortress built by Songtsan Gambo to celebrate Princess Wencheng's coming to Tibet, and consisted of 999 chambers, one thousand if the red tower on the summit was counted.

This first palace was seriously damaged by fire and lightning as well as by fighting in the ninth century, when the Tubo Kingdom disintegrated. As places such as Sakya developed to become the new seats of power in succeeding centuries, Lhasa declined.

In the fifteenth century, Tsong Khapa came to the Lhasa area and undertook the reformation of Buddhism in Tibet, enforcing a much stricter discipline than existing sects. Monks had to observe absolute celibacy and abstain from liquor. Later still, the fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682), Lobsang Gyatso, a great scholar, politician and architect, renovated and enlarged the Potala. Aided by a Mongol ruler, he it was who suppressed all rivals of the Yellow Sect and gathered the whole of Tibet under his rule.

Hand-pads help the devout in their prostrations before the Jokhang (1, by Zhong Guohua), where hand-held prayer-wheels are in perpetual motion (2). The Jokhang seems the very epitome of Tibetan Buddhist architecture (3) (last two by Shen Yantai).





1

The name of the Potala derives from the same origin as Mount Putuo, the holy Buddhist mountain off the coast of Zhejiang Province in eastern China. It is associated with the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, known in Tibet as Chenrezi, of whom the Dalai Lamas are said to be an incarnation.

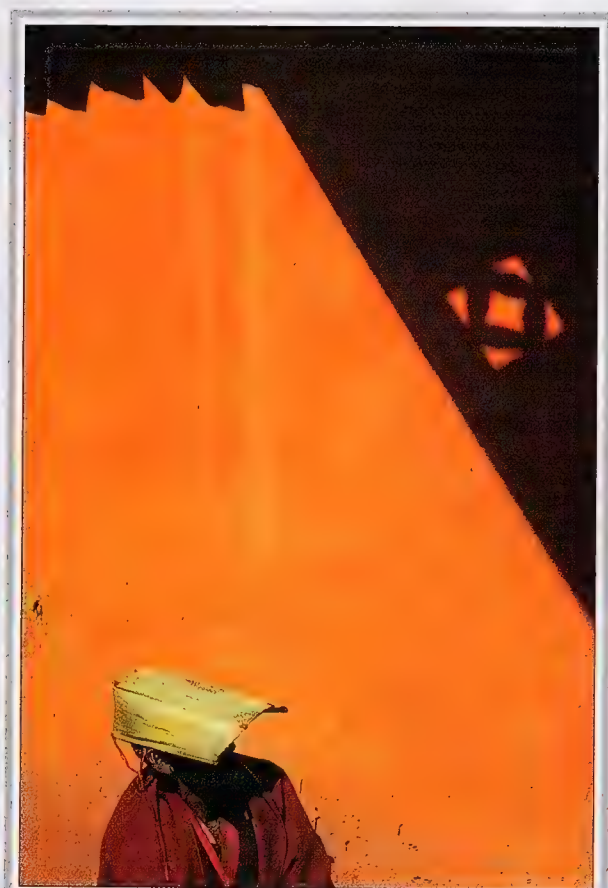
The majestic complex of earth, wood and brick towers more than 117 metres high, while it measures 400 metres from east to west and 350 metres from north to south. It consists of thirteen storeys and has two major sections distinguished by the colour of their walls: the White Palace and the Red Palace. The former served as the residence of the Dalai Lamas and also contained the offices of government. The great hall to the east was the venue for the most important ceremonies. The Red Palace was for more purely religious purposes and contains the tombs of most of the Dalai Lamas, as well as the scripture libraries.

In 1755 the seventh Dalai Lama (1708–1757), Kalsang Gyatso, started the construction of another palace called Norbu Lingka (Jewel Park) about four kilometres to the west of the Potala. This became the summer residence of the Dalai Lamas, while the Potala served as the winter residence. Much of the present construction was undertaken by the incumbent Dalai Lama between 1954 and 1956. Set in a large park, a popular site for picnics in Lhasa's summer months, Norbu Lingka is often referred to simply as the Summer Palace.

First Monastery of the Yellow Sect

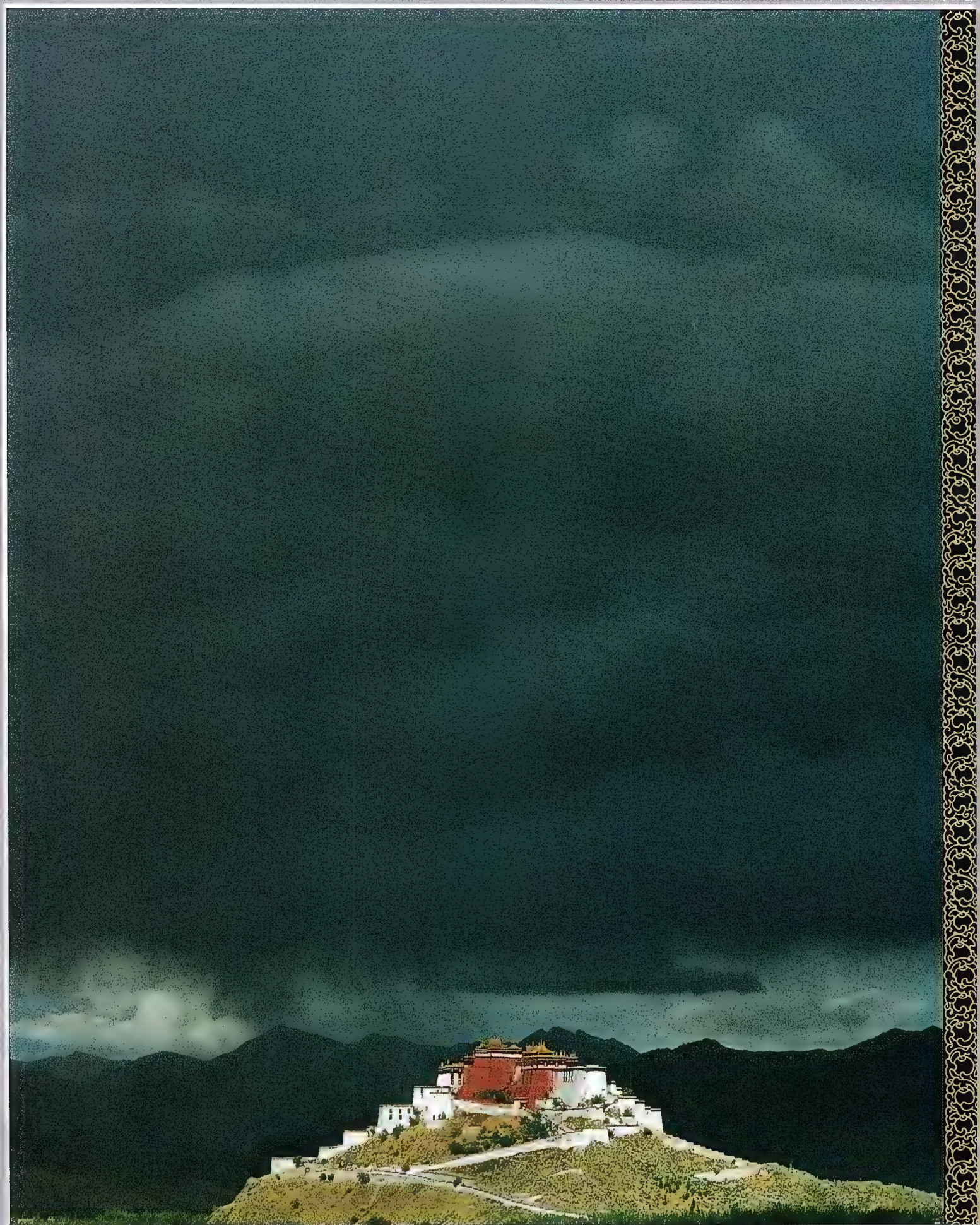
Founded by Tsong Khapa in 1409, Ganden Monastery, the first and one of the three major monasteries of the Yellow Sect, stands, largely in ruins, on Wangpor Hill by the Yarlung Zangbo some fifty kilometres east of the capital. For quite some time, the abbots of Ganden came third in importance after the Dalai and Panchen Lamas. This monastery, along with all its treasures, after being badly damaged in 1959, was razed to the ground during the 'cultural revolution' of 1966–1976, which affected Tibet particularly: All that was left were broken walls and fragments of tiles. Today the monastery is being restored slowly, mainly with voluntary labour, but several of the main halls are again in daily use.

It is said that Tsong Khapa chose Wangpor Hill as the site for his first monastery because it looked like a kneeling elephant with a temple on its back. Elephants are treasured in Buddhism. It is also believed that Ganden Monastery was the 'fourth heaven' in which Sakyamuni once lived. It was here that Tsong Khapa's tomb was located, his body having been embalmed in the manner of Living Buddhas and other supreme religious personages. His birthplace has developed into



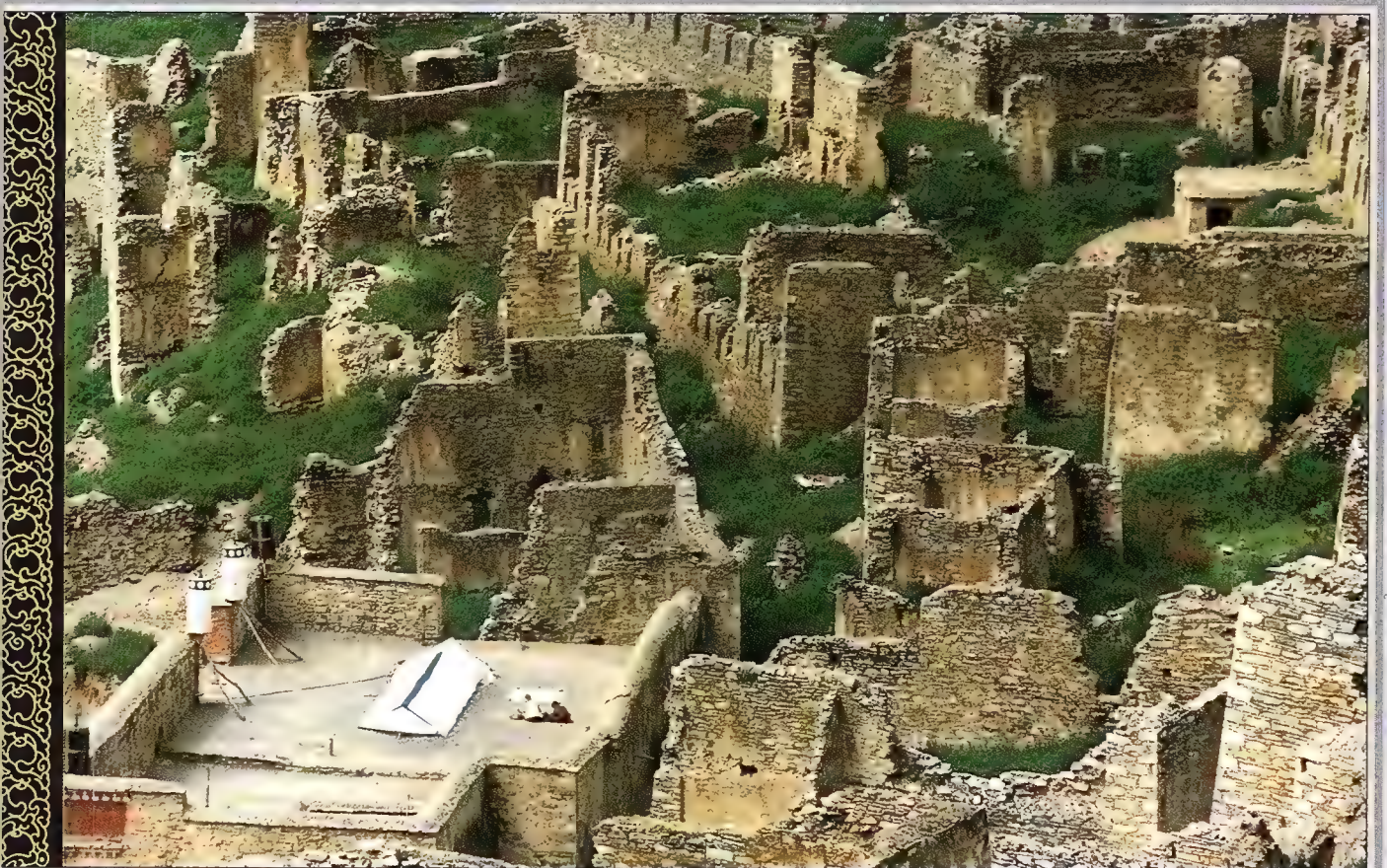
2

Senior lamas wear magnificent back panels for special festivals (1), while the typical Lhasa sun hat is yellow for monks, white or blue for everybody else (2). The Potala dominates Lhasa from its hilltop position (3) (all by Che Fu & Che Gang).





1



2

impressive monastery of Ta'er or Kumbum, located not far from Xining in present-day Qinghai Province.

The other one-time 'pillars of the state' are Tsongkhapa, founded in 1416, at its peak the largest with 10,000 monks, and Sera, founded in 1419, which had 7,000 monks and was noted for its tantric lore, the intelligence of its monks, and its small but feared army of warrior-monks.

Magic Monkey Weds the Ogress

South of Lhasa lies the site of the ancient Kingdom of the Tubo tribe, and it remained the centre of Tibetan power until King Songtsen Gambo moved his capital to Lhasa in the seventh century. Even after that date, the 'dead' bodies were routinely taken back to Zhetang for burial until the collapse of Tubo. The capital was at Zhetang almost two hundred kilometres from Lhasa; Zhetang is now the main town in Shannan District. Mount Gongbori behind the town is connected with a legend concerning the origin of the Tibetans.

Legend has it that, before humans appeared in Tibet, there was a cave on each of its three peaks. In one cave lived a chaste magic monkey (some versions say he was a disciple of Chenrezi, others his actual incarnation of the Bodhisattva), in another a beautiful ogress. The monkey was busy enough meditating alone in his cave until one day, he heard his ogress neighbour weeping. He went to investigate. She told him she was lonely and wanted him as her husband. The

monkey was not at all keen but Chenrezi advised him he should have children. So the magic monkey married the ogress and they had six children — said to be the ancestors of today's Tibetans. Zhetang itself gets its name from this legend since it literally means 'playground': it was here the monkey (or perhaps his children?) came to frolic....

Early Farmers

A village sprang up at the foot of the mountain, and it was here that the monkey came to help his descendants to clear and prepare the first plot of land for them to grow highland barley, following the instructions of Chenrezi. It is said that Tibetan farmers used to go there every year before the ploughing season to collect a handful of earth to scatter on their land to increase the fertility of their own fields.

These legends are not just folk tales. They are recorded in the *Annals of the Tibetan Kings* and form the subject of murals in the Potala and Narbu Lingka. Archaeologists' findings back up these legends and indicate that the forefathers of

(continued on page 103)

Yungpung Monastery still holds an annual Buddha-Sunning Festival (1), and life is gradually re-emerging at ravaged Ganden Monastery (2). A mass of swamp grasses tightens the road to Zhetang (3, by Du Junong). Tending the family's yak near Zizhokunggar (4) (1, 2 and 4 by Zhong Huihua).



3



4

The Mysteries of Western Tibet

ARTICLE BY JUN PIN





Photo by Yang Yankang

Set between the Kunlun Range and the western part of the Himalaya, the district of Ngari (Ali) in western Tibet covers an area of over 350,000 square kilometres on the Qiangtang Plateau. Its average elevation above sea-level is 4,500 metres – which earns it its sobriquet ‘the roof of the roof of the world’ – and the climate is exceedingly cold and dry year-round. Crops cannot grow here, except in isolated pockets. It is hard enough for coarse grasses and mosses to survive. Seen from the air, the pale-yellow steppes stretching away into infinity seem totally barren.



Ngari is sometimes referred to as a 'no-man's land'. However, the real uninhabited zone is north of Gê'gyai and Gêzê. The administrative centre of Ngari is Shiquanhe, an important junction on the Xinjiang-Tibet Highway and 1,750 kilometres west of Lhasa.

In August, during the annual thaw, the countless rivulets flowing from the clustered snow peaks of the Kunlun, Gangdisê and Himalaya furrow the ridges and dot the district with many lakes. The scenery can be enchanting as masses of fluffy white clouds float

dependent kingdoms and feudal estates. The last king Lang Darma's great-grandson Nyim-agon set up his own sphere of influence in the far western reaches of Tibet. It was his grandson who was responsible for founding the kingdom of Guge.

The ruins of the ancient capital at Tsaparang are located on the south bank of the Langqên Zangbo (the Sutlej, a tributary of the Indus) twenty kilometres from Zanda. The city was built in a strategic position on a rocky spur between two deep canyons. More than three

Below this building lies the Red Temple named in its turn for its dark-red colouring. contains thirty-six huge square pillars. Among the most eye-catching of the frescoes here is a scene of people greeting the Indian scholar and monk, Atisa.

Guge's founder, Keri, is said to have been a devoted Buddhist who abdicated in favour of his younger brother to become the monk Yeshe-ö. He fostered Buddhism, sending bright young scholars to India to study the scriptures. One of these, Rinchen Songbu



across the blue sky, reflections of the snow-capped peaks shimmer in the lakes, and grasses grow in profusion by the lakesides, providing grazing for yaks and sheep.

The Rise of Guge

About a thousand years ago, a kingdom named Guge was established in these highlands. It lasted for more than seven hundred years.

It came about as the result of the collapse of the Tubo Kingdom in the mid-ninth century, whereupon Tibet tore itself apart into in-

hundred caves honeycomb the site and one tower after another rises, silent and rather eerie, on the steep and heavily eroded hillside.

The White Temple (so named because its outer walls were whitewashed) lies beyond a gate which is buried almost one-third deep in the yellowish soil. Inside the temple one can still admire the ceiling designs of lions, elephants, horses and dragons. The northern wall is covered with colourful murals depicting ancient Tibetan kings, including those of the Guge lineage for over twenty generations.

(958-1055), the renowned translator, returned from India in 978 and in his turn encouraged Buddhism. He is credited with building monasteries at Tsaparang and Toling (present-day Zanda), among many others. In his declining years Yeshe-ö sent envoys to India to urge Atisa (982-1054) to visit his kingdom. In 1042, after some delay, Atisa arrived at Toling, stimulating a resurgence of interest in the Buddhist faith in the western Tibetan kingdom. After two years, the Indian monk continued to central Tibet where he founded the Kadampa Order, which was later



absorbed into the Gelugpa or Yellow Sect in the fourteenth century. This was the sect which gave rise to the Dalai Lamas and re-established Lhasa as the spiritual and temporal capital of Tibet.

Along the city wall, which juts out over the abyss, there are great piles of pebbles, said to have been used as weapons in time of war. To enter the heart of the former royal palace, perched on the summit, one has to go through an underground tunnel. The place was so well fortified that it was wellnigh im-



pregnable. And yet fall it did. The reason remains obscure. Some say there was a successful siege by Kashmiri forces. Others say there was a prolonged drought. Some say factional fighting, possibly linked to the arrival in 1625 of a Portuguese missionary, caused a revolt against the king and Guge's downfall.

The ruins of the Guge capital at Tsaparang (1, by Yang Yankang) are set in the deeply eroded, sparsely inhabited lands of southern Ngari District (2, by Che Fu & Che Gang).



Whatever, the Guge capital is now more or less just a vast pile of rubble, except for the main temples.

Holy of Holies

North of Burang, at the foot of the most famous peak of the Gangdisê Range, Mount Kangrinboqê (Kailash), sits Mapam Yumco, whose 329 square kilometres of waters are constantly topped up by snow melt. At 4,558 metres above sea-level, this is claimed to be the highest body of fresh water in the world.

known by its name in Sanskrit, Manasarovar (Lake of Light, or of the Sun).

It has a strange 'twin' lying to the west, La'nga Co or Rakastal, the Lake of Demons. This is curved like the crescent moon, as opposed to Mapam Yumco's almost completely round shape. Mapam Yumco is associated with the forces of light, La'nga Co with the forces of darkness. It is also sacred, but it is devoid of monasteries or retreats and it has an uncanny atmosphere.

Devout Tibetans believe they should cir-

holiest places of the region. They come from all parts of Tibet, but also from across the border, from India and Nepal.

The holy mountain to the north, Kangrinboqê, rises 6,714 metres above sea-level. Its name in Tibetan is variously said to mean 'abode of the gods' or 'jewel of the snows' while its Sanskrit name, Kailash, means 'throne of Shiva' (Shiva is one of the three main Hindu deities). Buddhist scripture identifies it with Mount Sumeru, centre of the universe, and even consider it an incarnation



1 The lake is so limpid you can see fish swimming sixteen metres down. Buddhists believe that ritual immersion in its waters can purify their soul from sin and remove the five evils: covetousness, anger, passion, sloth and envy.

One ancient text records that, nine hundred years ago, the lake was named Mazui Co after a dragon king who lived in a palace under the waters. It was later renamed Mapam Yumco, meaning 'eternal lake'. *Records of the Western Regions* written by Xuan Zang (602-664) refers to it as Xitian Yaochi (Jade Pond of the Western Sky). However, it is best

to circumambulate Mapam Yumco at least once in their lifetime, preferably in late summer or early autumn. It takes about three days to complete one circuit of around one hundred kilometres. Followers of Bon do it counter-clockwise, Buddhists clockwise, as prescribed by their religion. Pebbles or a bird's feather found on the ground will be treasured as something holy, a gift from the lake, and small bottles of its water are taken back for those who cannot themselves make the pilgrimage. People in their thousands come here every year as part of their circuit of the

of Maitreya, the Buddha of the Future. It is revered by the Hindu, Jain, Buddhist and Bon faiths.

Legend has it that when the saintly Atisa was passing this mountain on his way to Guge, he suddenly heard the sound of drums and bells. He believed that the sounds were emanating from where five hundred arhats were attending a religious service on the mountain.


The striking-looking peak is in the shape of a pyramid. Each of its four sharply etched faces - like the facets of a jewel - matches a



point of the compass. A distinct gully runs down the south face from the summit, cutting across a horizontal furrow, a rock-band. The latter is said to be the snake that twines round Lord Shiva's neck.

The circuit of the holy mountain covers around fifty-six kilometres. Tibetan Buddhists believe that walking round the mountain once will redeem them from their sins; walking round it ten times will exempt them from hell's sufferings; walking round it a hundred times will enable them to go straight to



Nirvana. Many devotees accumulate even more merit by taking only three steps each time before prostrating themselves full-length and so on, all the way round, whatever their age....  **Translated by Ren Jiazhen**

Sacred sites: Kangrinboqê at sunset (1); meditating beside Mapam Yumco (3) (both by Che Gang). The motifs – granary, scorpion – above the kitchen range symbolize the hope for clean and abundant food (2). The cooking fuel is yak dung, shaped into pats and dried (4) (last two by Che Fu & Che Gang).

TIBET



SPECIAL

Xigazê - Capital of Back Tibet

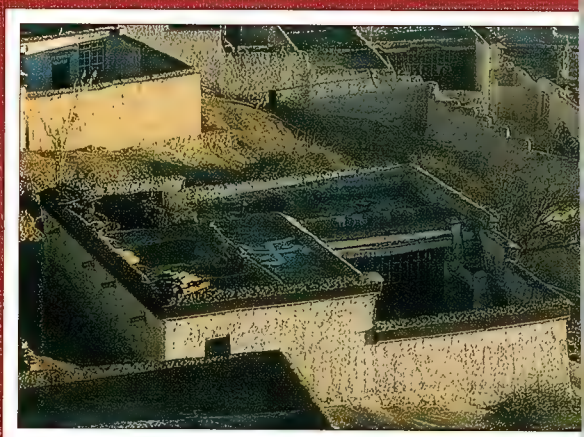


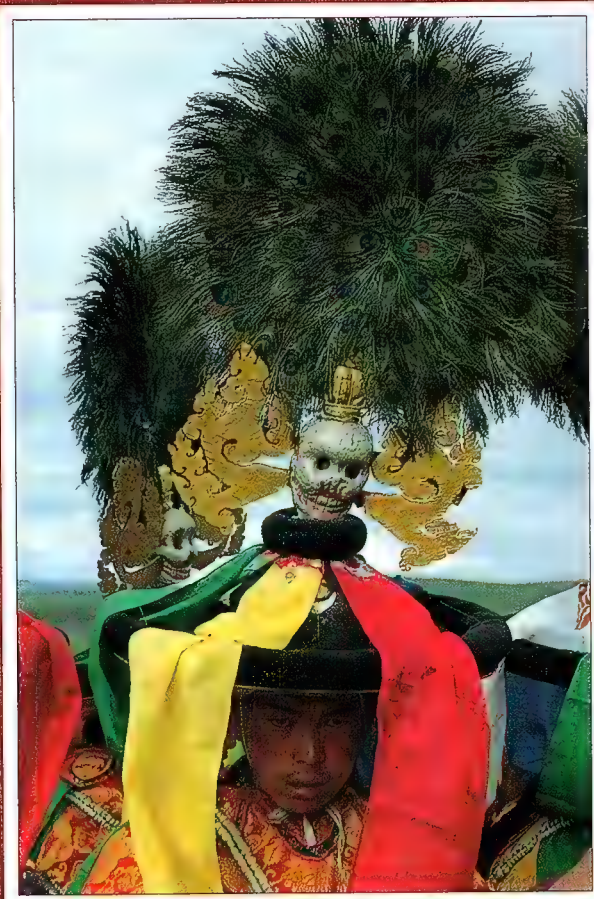
PHOTOS BY CHE FU & CHE GANG
ARTICLE BY JUN PING



Located on the southern bank of the Yarlung Zangbo at its confluence with the Nyangqu, Xigazê – meaning ‘splendid garden’ – is Tibet’s second largest town. It is 355 kilometres west of Lhasa, it has a population of around 40,000, and it is set 3,870 metres above sea-level.

The town is more than five hundred years old and developed into the religious and political centre of Zang or Back Tibet, often in rivalry with Lhasa, the capital of U or Front Tibet. Legend has it that the two Indian pundits Atisa and Padmasambhava passed this way (several centuries apart!) when they came to Tibet. In the eighth century, Padmasambhava is said to have observed that Mount Nyima in Xigazê looked like a lion springing into the sky and believed that this would make the ideal location for a centre for preaching Buddhism.





Sakya Monastery was the base of the powerful Sakyapa Sect (1, by Yang Yaotang). Fearsome faces guard the entrance to a temple (2), and a grinning skull forms part of a performer's headdress in the Sorcerers' Dance (4, by Che Gang). Local dwellings are compact and self-contained (3).

simultaneously. The Kadampa Sect began with Atisa after 1050, the Kagyupa Sect (of which the powerful Karmapa of Back Tibet was a branch) with Marpa in 1060, the Sakyapa Sect about ten years later. These were known by the general term of Red Sect. The Gelugpa or Yellow Sect was a later creation by the reformer Tsong Khapa in 1407 and incorporated certain aspects of the existing sects. Each of them built centres for the study and propagation of their own doctrines, and there was considerable rivalry and in-fighting between them.

The First Theocracy

By far the most important development for the Xigazê area was the rise of the Sakyapa Sect. Its base was Sakya Monastery about 160 kilometres southwest of Xigazê. This monastery consists of two buildings: the southern monastery, built in 1268, which looks more like a fortress; and the northern monastery, now a ruin, built in 1073 by the founder of the sect. Sakyapa means 'white earth', and the enclosing walls of the monastery are strikingly painted with brick-red, black and white stripes, symbolizing Manjusri, Vajradhara and Avalokitesvara respectively.

This was a place of exile for Yuan-dynasty prisoners. It is said that the last emperor of the Southern Song dynasty, Zhao Xian, carried off by the victorious Mongols, lived here in exile from 1276 until his death, his solitude punctuated only by morning and evening prayers.

For nearly one hundred years from the mid-thirteenth century onwards, Sakya Monastery – as the seat of the Sakyapa

Songtsan Gambo of the Tubo Kingdom, Buddhism became more popular and its influence spread, primarily due to the strong faith of the king's two wives from China and Nepal.

But in the mid-ninth century, King Lang Darma banned Buddhism, closed its monasteries and destroyed religious artefacts and scriptures, favouring the earlier Bon faith. When he was assassinated by a vengeful Buddhist monk in 845, the Tubo Kingdom fell apart and Buddhism very nearly died out. However, in the tenth century, it was re-introduced in western Tibet, thanks to Atisa and the kings of Guge, and this time it thrived.

Five main sects of Tibetan Buddhism evolved at different periods. The Nyingmapa was the earliest, dating back to the eighth century and Padmasambhava's arrival in Tibet; it incorporated many aspects of Bon. The next three developed more or less

Prior to the introduction of Buddhism into Tibet, the Tibetans followed their own indigenous faith – Bon, also known as the Black Sect, a shamanistic religion involving much magic. During the rule of



ers – was the political, religious and economic centre of all of Tibet. According to historical records, the Mongolian royal household wished to strengthen its rule over

Tibet at that time. In 1244 Godan (Koidan), a grandson of Genghis Khan, invited Sapan Kundga Gymtsán (1182–1253) – the fourth abbot – to a meeting in Liangzhou (present-day Wuwei in Gansu Province). The abbot took with him his young nephew, Phagspa (1235–1280). The result of that meeting was

an agreement that Tibet would become part of the Mongolian Khanate. As a direct consequence, in 1260 Kublai Khan, future founder of the Yuan dynasty, granted Phagspa (who had in the meantime become abbot) jurisdiction over Tibet as well as the title 'teacher of the nation'. Phagspa, who lived in Beijing for many years, became Kublai Khan's lifelong mentor and created for him a Mongolian script based on the Tibetan one.

The Sakyapa rulers heralded the theocratic system, the total integration of religious and political powers, which would continue to be a feature of Tibet for many centuries. They also followed a system of hereditary succession within two families, the title passing to a younger brother or a nephew (the Sakyapa Sect was not strictly celibate).

Seat of the Panchen Lamas

With Kublai's death, Sakya lost its imperial patron and Tibetan Buddhism waned in importance in the eyes of the Yuan court. Tashilhunpo Monastery gradually took over as the religious centre of Back Tibet. In fact, it could be said that without Tashilhunpo there would be no Xigazê. This, the largest Yellow Sect monastery in Back Tibet, is located at the foot of Dromari (Tara's Mountain) west of the town of Xigazê. Its numerous halls are built against the hillside, which was once topped by a fortress. The latter was demolished during the 'cultural revolution'.

In 1447 the first Dalai Lama (1391–1474), Gedun Drub, a leading disciple of Tsong



Tashilhunpo monks conclude the three-day Buddha-Displaying Festival by throwing zanba (barley flour) skywards.

Khapa, had a 2.7-metre-high gilt bronze statue of Sakyamuni cast in Xigazê to honour the memory of his deceased prayer master, Sutracarya Xirao Sengge. He spent a further twelve years building a monastery to house the statue, and became the first abbot. This Dalai Lama is interred in a funerary stupa here at Tashilhunpo unlike his successors, who are in Lhasa.

Initially, the monastery was named Gangchen Chopel, meaning 'rebirth of Buddhism in the Land of Snows' but this was later changed to its present name meaning 'auspicious Sumeru' (Sumeru being the sacred mountain of Buddhist legend).

The monastery is famous as the official residence of the Panchen Lamas, a title created in the seventeenth century. Although at that time the Yellow Sect was firmly established, Back Tibet still largely adhered to the Red Sect. Eventually the fifth Dalai Lama called on the Mongol leader Gushri Khan to intercede in the sectarian strife, resulting in the Dalai Lama being put in overall control of Tibet. He installed his trusted tutor as the sixteenth abbot of Tashilhunpo and gave him the title of Panchen Lama so that he could act as his spiritual right hand in Back Tibet. This person counted as not the first but the fourth Panchen Lama, numbers one to three having been abbots granted the title posthumously. The fourth, fifth and sixth Panchen Lamas were responsible for creating the greater part of the monastery buildings.

Tashilhunpo Monastery today covers an area of 18.5 hectares. It is divided into four parts: the Panchen Lama's Palace, the Great

Stupa, consecrated in 1989 by the late Panchen Lama, where the funerary stupas of Panchen Lamas are kept, the Sutra Hall, and the Kanbu Conference (the supreme authority of the past in Back Tibet). There are a total of fifty-seven halls, big and small, fourteen of which have gold roofs. Inside the Main Chanting Hall containing the Panchen Lama's throne there are ancient murals, including portraits of Tsong Khapa and his disciples as well as depictions of other religious leaders. The hall can accommodate over two thousand monks. Not far away is a hall called the Han Buddhist Chamber, a unique institution. This contains a reception room for the resident minister placed in Tibet by the Qing court. The Panchen Lama would receive imperial edicts in this chamber and then chat with the resident minister over a cup of tea.

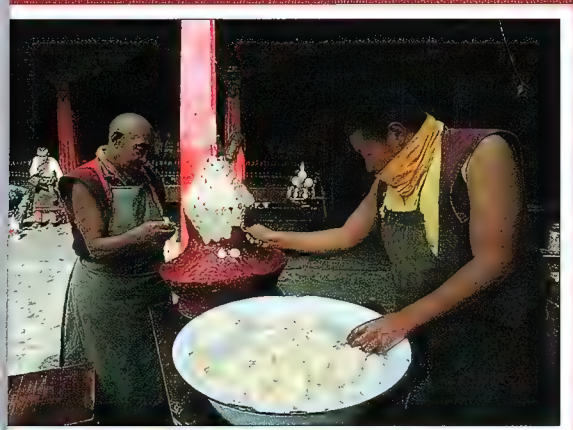
Tashilhunpo's Monks

Tashilhunpo was once an enormous religious community with over four thousand monks.

(Continued on page 103)



Xigazê District stretches south to the Himalaya; this nunnery in the foothills of Mount Qomolangma has a complement of just eight nuns (1). Monks are kept busy shaping offerings from butter (3) and distributing butter tea (4, by Che Gang). Young novices have years of study ahead if they wish to become lamas (2).



3



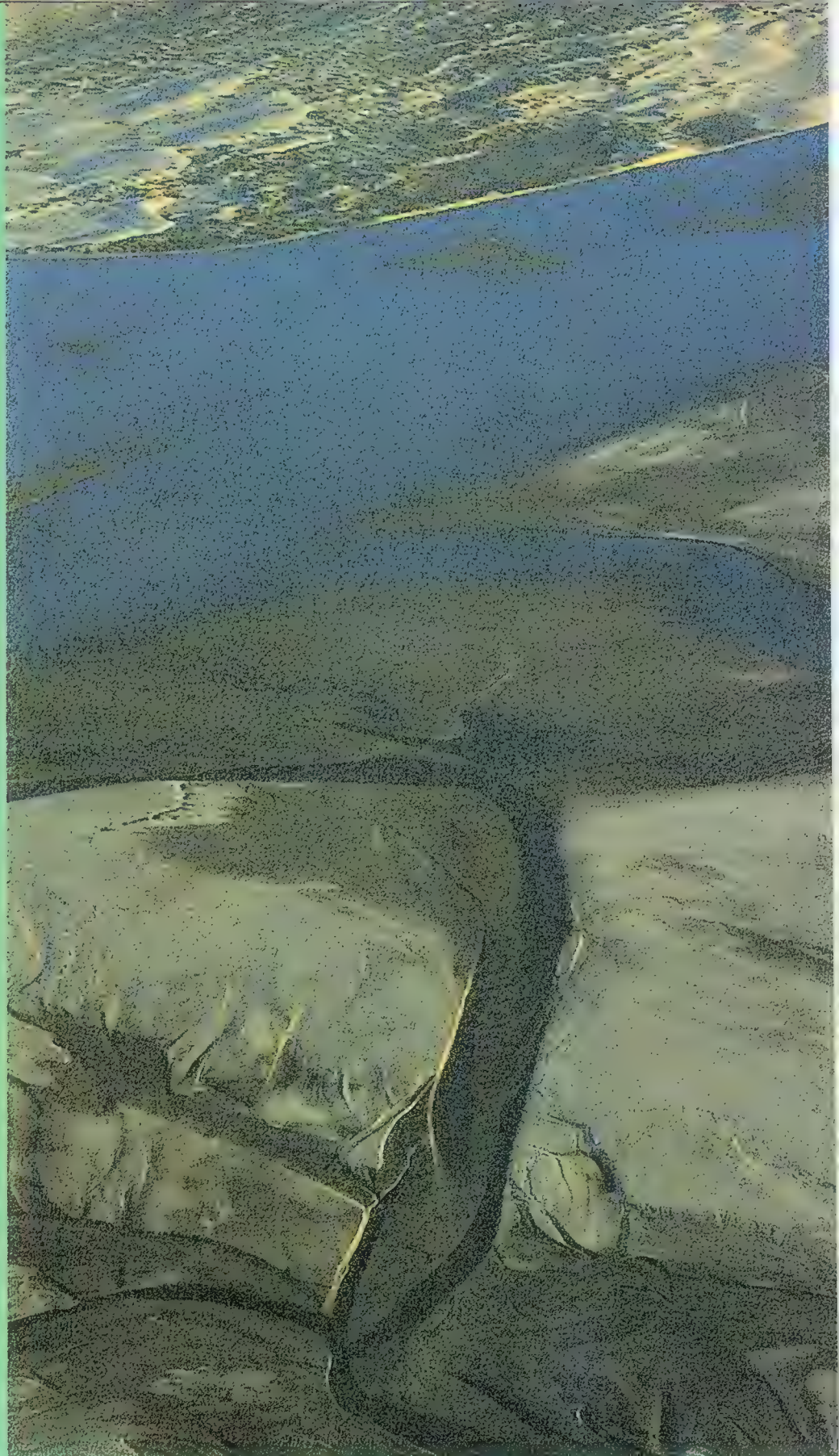
4



River on the Roof

of the World

PHOTOS BY CHE FU & CHE GANG
ARTICLE BY CHENG CHENG





The Yarlung Zangbo flows from west to east on a line north of the Himalaya, south of the Gangdisê Mountains, and parallel to both. Lying at an average altitude of over 4,500 metres above sea-level, it is said to be the highest river in the world. It is in fact the upper half, the headwaters, of the great Brahmaputra of India, and its length within Tibet alone is 2,057 kilometres. The overall length of the river from its source to where it exits, together with the Ganges, into the Bay of Bengal is 2,900 kilometres.

To Tibetans, the Yarlung Zangbo is in a sense a 'holy' river. It has its source in the glaciers north of the Himalaya in Ngari District, not far east of Mapam Yumco (Lake Manasarovar) and Mount Kangrinboqê (Kailash). A number of the other great rivers of Asia — the Indus, Sutlej and Ganges — rise in the same area. In ancient scriptures these rivers were described as outlets from Mapam Yumco and were said to encircle the sacred area seven times before flowing off in their various directions, thus paying homage and forming a sort of mandala or mystic diagram around Mount Kangrinboqê, the 'abode of the gods'.

As far as the birth of the Yarlung Zangbo is concerned, three small branch streams are fed by the glaciers and melting snow — the Mayum Zangbo, Kubi Zangbo and Jiernayangzong. The latter springs from the glacier of the same name and is often considered the main source. The three streams converge initially to form the Maquan or Damqog Zangbo.

In Tibetan, 'Jiernayangzong' refers to the moraine or debris left behind by a receding glacier, so it is interesting to note that the river at this point flows through a broad, 200-kilometre-long valley across a high plateau formed by moraines. The super-clear waters crisscross and meander to form oxbow lakes and swamplands, features associated with a river running across a plain, although this one stands at 4,700 metres above sea-level. Although the high peaks of the Himalaya block the path of the monsoon, the Gangdisê Range also keeps out the worst of the cold air from the north, so the Maquan Valley is rich in alpine grasslands. Herdsmen pitch their tents here in summer to graze their sheep and yaks on the excellent pastures.

The Fertile Yarlung Valley

The middle reaches of the Yarlung Zangbo in Tibet stretch from Lëgzê in Saga (Gya'gya) County to Mainling, a distance of 1,300 kilometres. With mountain ranges on either side, the river's emerald-green waters wind their way through a maze of sandy shoals. This is known as a 'braided' river system. In some areas, the river has as many as twenty branches, which shift their course continually. In some places it has to penetrate deep gorges through mountains, at others it describes lazy curves through valleys five to ten kilometres wide.

According to geographers, this river marks the suture line between the two continental plates — the Eurasian and the Indian — whose collision around five million years ago during the second episode of Himalayan movement produced the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau.

From the air, one can pick out the chief tributaries — the Raka Zangbo, Nyangqu and Lhasa River — as they join the Yarlung Zangbo. Between them they produce alluvial plains at an average altitude above sea-level of 3,500 metres. This is actually a flood plain, with frequent flooding between May and September when the river is swollen by snowmelt. Because of the constant cycle of floods and rich deposits, the river



Photo by Du Younong



Photo by Hu Yi



produces good farmland and the Yarlung Valley is known as the granary of Tibet. Highland barley, wheat, peas, rape, even bananas, tangerines and peaches grow here, often in fields with the farmhouse built in one corner and rows of trees planted to shield the crops from the wind.

Tibetans were already settled along these middle reaches of the Yarlung Zangbo by the first century A.D. The first tribe to gain the upper hand, the Tubo, had its power base in the Yarlung Valley in what is now Qonggyai County. Even after the Tubo capital was moved to Lhasa by Songtsan Gambo in the seventh century, all the main developments — cultural, religious and political — in Tibet took place in and around the river valley.

The Yarlung Zangbo is navigable for four hundred kilometres between Lhazê in Xigazê District and Zêtang in Shannan. Here its bed is broad, its waters calm. Yak-hide coracles and wooden boats ply backwards and forwards transporting goods and people, while tug-drawn barges act as vehicular ferries at specific crossing points.

Big Bend in Eastern Tibet

Once past Mainling, the Yarlung Zangbo enters the southeastern fringes of the high plateau, with much more fractured terrain and the lowest altitudes in Tibet. Evergreens — spruces, firs and mountain pines — line both banks of the river. Under the impact of the monsoons from the Indian Ocean which penetrate the mountain barrier along the breach formed by the river itself, this region enjoys a mild climate with abundant rainfall. Thickly wooded mountain ranges link the forests of southwestern Sichuan, northwestern Yunnan, and northern Burma and India.

Mid-way between Mainling and Mêdog the river's flow is impeded by the 7,756-metre Namjagbarwa (Namcha Barwa), the highest peak in the eastern Himalaya. This produces the famous 'big bend' of the Yarlung Zangbo, where the river is forced to make a U-turn, turning back on its course in a tight loop. On the south bank rises Namjagbarwa, on the north bank Gyala Peri, itself over seven thousand metres high. This is a place of wild rapids and cascades, the river waters bunching up in a series of gorges between vertical cliffs. There are also tributaries flowing in at this point from the northeast — primarily the Yi'ong Zangbo — adding to the confusion and fury of the waters. The narrowest section of the river is less than eighty metres across, and in some places the water velocity is as much as sixteen metres per second.

Beyond Mêdog, after the torrent has dropped to only six hundred metres above sea-level, it continues to flow more or less south through the tropical forests of the Himalayan foothills of India's Arunachal Pradesh. Once out of the mountains, it turns again to cross the Assam Plain in a southwesterly direction. Finally, in Bangladesh, renamed the Jamuna, it merges with the Ganges and flows with it into the Bay of Bengal through the tidal swamp forests of the vast delta, the world's largest.

G

Translated by He Fei

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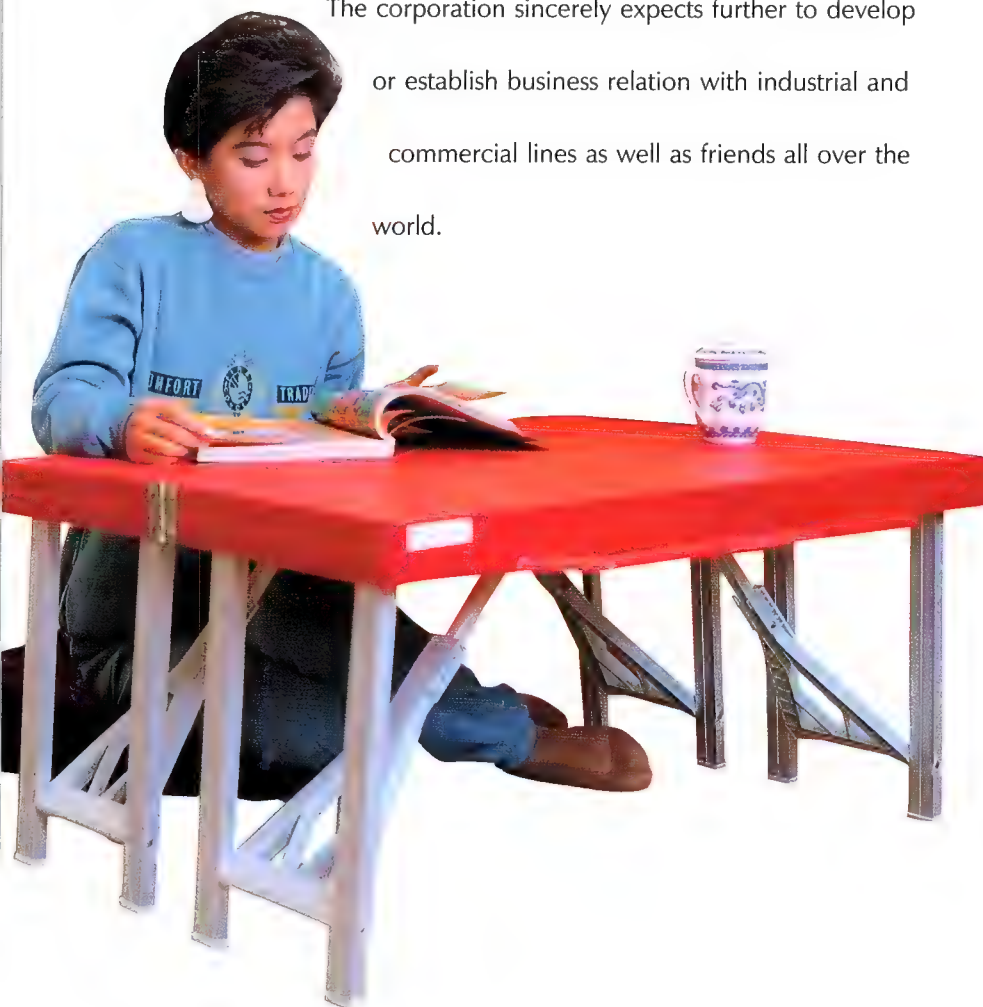
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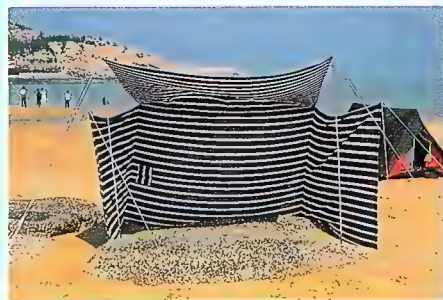
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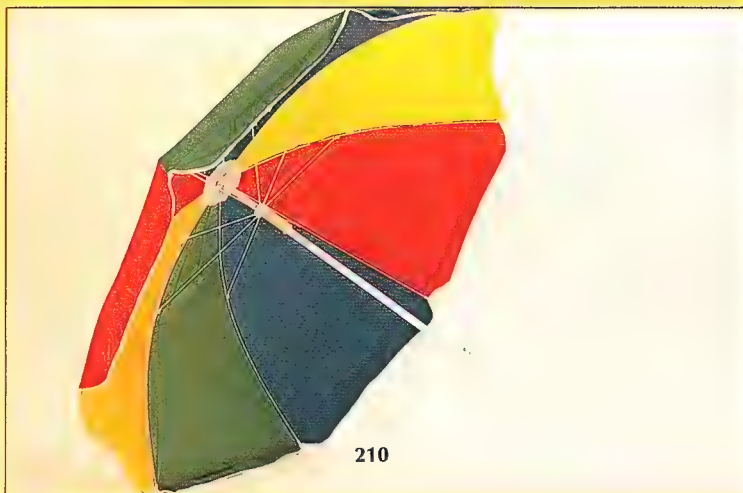


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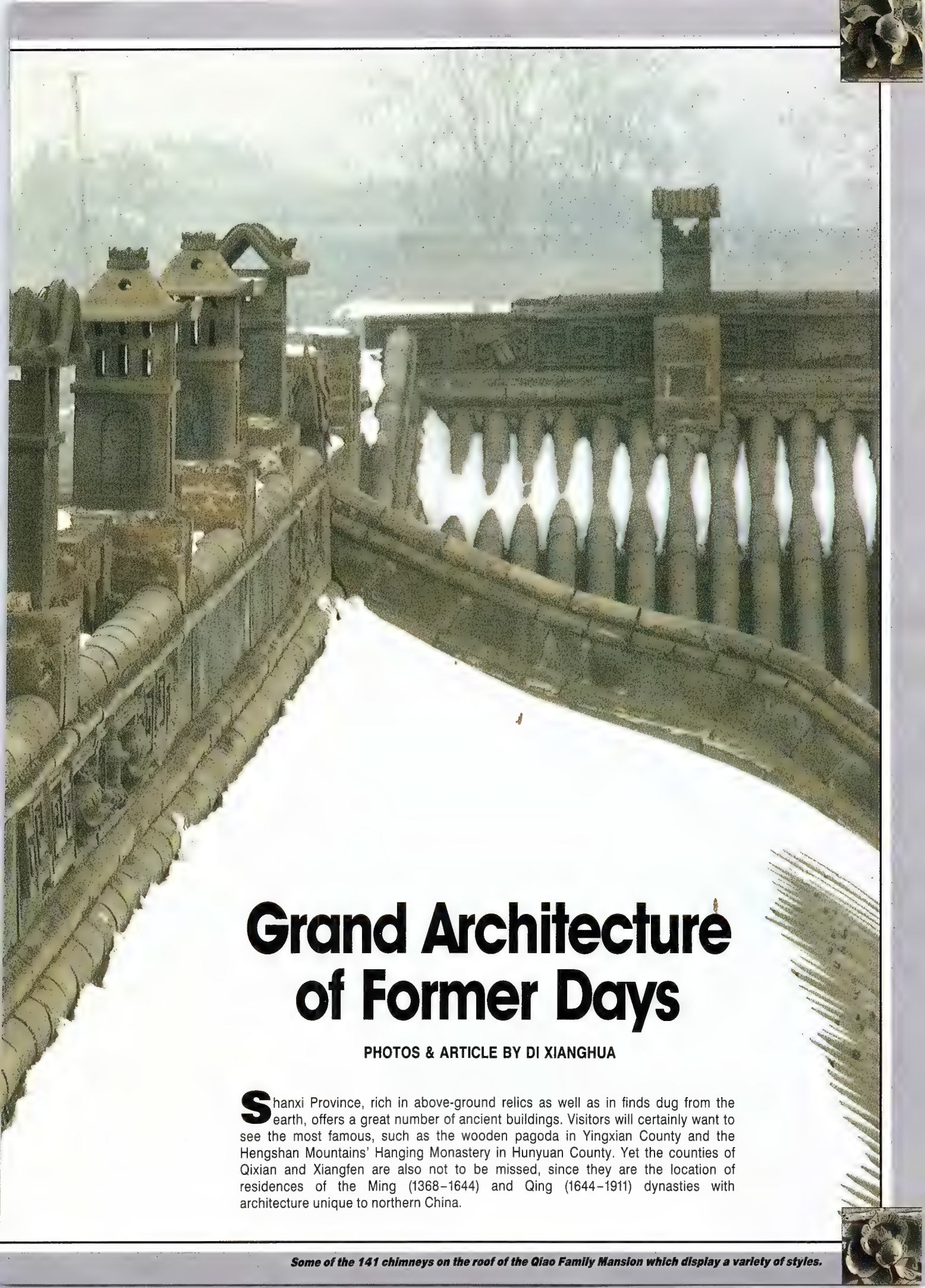
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Grand Architecture of Former Days

PHOTOS & ARTICLE BY DI XIANGHUA

Shanxi Province, rich in above-ground relics as well as in finds dug from the earth, offers a great number of ancient buildings. Visitors will certainly want to see the most famous, such as the wooden pagoda in Yingxian County and the Hengshan Mountains' Hanging Monastery in Hunyuan County. Yet the counties of Qixian and Xiangfen are also not to be missed, since they are the location of residences of the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties with architecture unique to northern China.

Some of the 141 chimneys on the roof of the Qiao Family Mansion which display a variety of styles.

The Qiao Family Mansion





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Qixian County lies fifty-four kilometres south of the provincial capital Taiyuan. The focus of interest here is the village of Qiaojiabu and the Qiao Family Mansion. Built in 1755 in the Qing dynasty, the mansion occupies an area of 0.872 hectares. In all it has six major courtyards and nineteen minor ones, with 313 rooms. Additions have been made over time, of course, and the complex had been renovated twice by the time of the Chinese Republic in 1921. Yet it has managed to retain its original style.

The person responsible for its construction was a rich merchant. He and his descendants enjoyed prestige and status for two centuries from the mid-eighteenth century down to 1949. In its most prosperous days the Qiao family had commercial enterprises and banking ventures in practically every important city in China. By the 1940s, however, the family fortunes had declined irreversibly.

As you approach Qiaojiabu, you see a fortress-like structure surrounded by streets on three sides. The complex is surrounded by grey brick walls over ten metres high, with a crenellated top. Towers stand at all four corners. 141 chimneys are visible on the rooftops in a variety of different designs. The

protective walls form a sealed, detached unit and make this wholly different from the houses round it. A pavilion on the southwestern corner commands a panoramic view over the entire estate. From this vantage point it becomes clear that the mansion is laid out in the shape of the Chinese character *xi* 喜 (happiness).

The mansion is now the site of the Museum of Folk Customs, reflecting the practices of the people of central Shanxi during the final years of the Qing dynasty and the early years of the Chinese Republic.

Each of the six major courtyards contains three to five secondary ones, so you find courtyards within courtyards, a real labyrinth in which you could easily get lost without a guide. Of the major courtyards, some are older, some of more recent date. The older ones display the architectural style of the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, in other words, the second half of the seventeenth century. In the newer courtyards the architecture, interior lighting and decorations reveal touches of some European influence. But there is no clash between old and new; they blend harmoniously.

As in numerous ancient Chinese buildings, excellent carvings in stone, wood and brick can be seen all over the complex: on roof ridges, beams, lattice windows,

stone bases of columns, *dougong* (the carved brackets supporting the eaves) and screen walls. Each carving has a precise symbolic significance. For instance, the grapes on the balustrades are a hope for long-lasting good fortune. The hanging lotus implies the wish for many sons, sons destined to become high officials. In one passageway there are illustrations in stone of popular historical tales. Yet another carving depicts a birthday party, with gifts being presented by the eight Taoist immortals. All these carvings are skilfully executed and impart a sense of aesthetic enjoyment.

Further south, in Xiangfen County, lies the small village of Dingcun. In 1954, Chinese archaeologists identified this as the site of an ancient culture of middle Palaeolithic man of some 150,000 years ago. The initial finds included fossilized human teeth (two incisors and one molar), together with stone implements and animal fossils. In 1976 a piece of fossilized skull was

The harmony of the Qiao Family Mansion (3) is evident in touches such as the brick carvings on walls (1) and around gateways (2). Making paper the traditional way (4).

Site of an Ancient Culture





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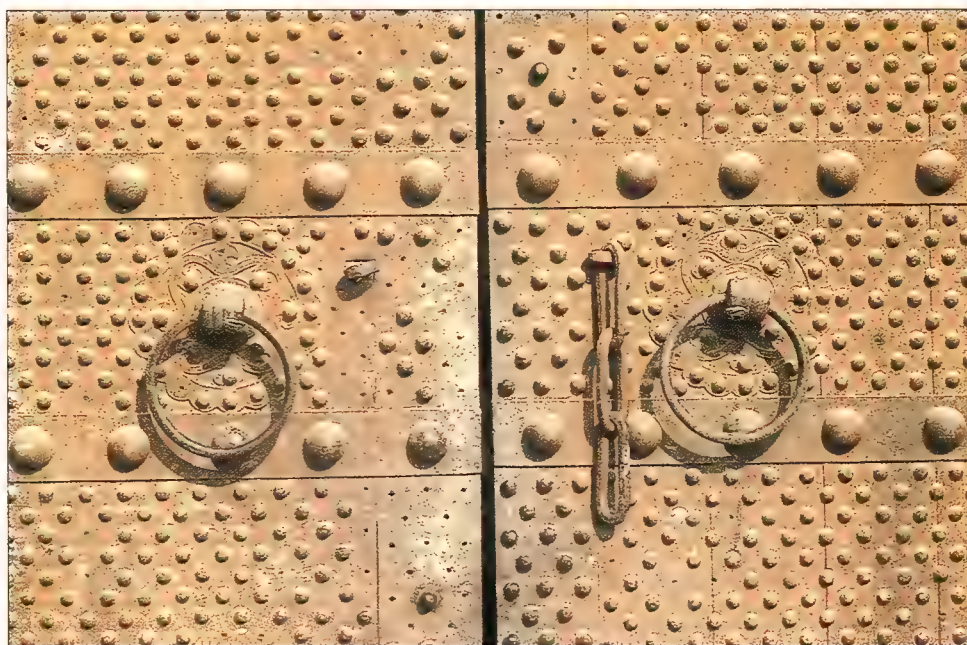


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discovered. The ancient man, who lived in the same general period as Maba Man, found in northern Guangdong in 1958, was given the name Dingcun Man. He came considerably later than Peking Man, who lived around 500,000 years ago, let alone Yuanmou Man, who lived around 1.7 million years ago.

Apart from its interest as a place of early habitation, Dingcun also contains some of the best examples of Han Chinese folk architecture from the Ming and Qing eras. The village presents a charming sight from a distance, with ancient dwellings dotted in among jujube trees and cypresses. Most of the residences are of the courtyard type, consisting of a main building on the north with east and west wings, plus rooms on the south side. The layout is more or less identical to the *siheyuan*, the traditional residential quadrangles of Beijing, but these at Dingcun are larger, higher and more refined.

There are still over twenty such residential complexes here, the oldest dating from 1593.



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Others date from the late seventeenth, early eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries. The earliest ones are of the *siheyuan* type, clearly marked by a symmetrical axis and forming a hermetic unit. They are fairly plain, so carved decorations are found only on the main buildings. By comparison, the distinguishing feature of the Qing-dynasty complexes — apart from their greater size — is their complex decoration.

One of the most interesting compounds is now the Dingcun Folk Museum. Its ten exhibition halls present customs and festivals of

The graceful pavilion over the alley at Dingcun also served as a lookout post (1). Wood carvings proliferate under the eaves (2): here a detail of magpies, deer, wasps and monkey (5). The door knocker bases are fashioned like hands (4). Cottage industry — spinning yarn (3).

southern Shanxi. You enter its first courtyard through the Xuandelang Archway. This was erected in honour of an ancestor by the original owner of this building, one Ding Xilian, who bought himself an official position as a sub-prefectural magistrate. His ancestor was granted the posthumous title of Xuandelang, literally, 'imperial bodyguard of Xuande (Emperor Xuanzong who ruled 1426-1435 in the Ming dynasty)', by Emperor Qianlong in the eighteenth century.

The forty courtyards of the Dingcun Folk Museum are distinguished by very fine carvings in wood. Courtyard No. 8, constructed in 1731, has perhaps the best and most intricate of all. The main building in this courtyard is two-storeyed and faces south. Its master beam has a basic design of lotuses on which are carved — from left to right — magpies, deer, wasps and monkeys. The names of these four in Chinese are homonyms of the characters *xi lu*



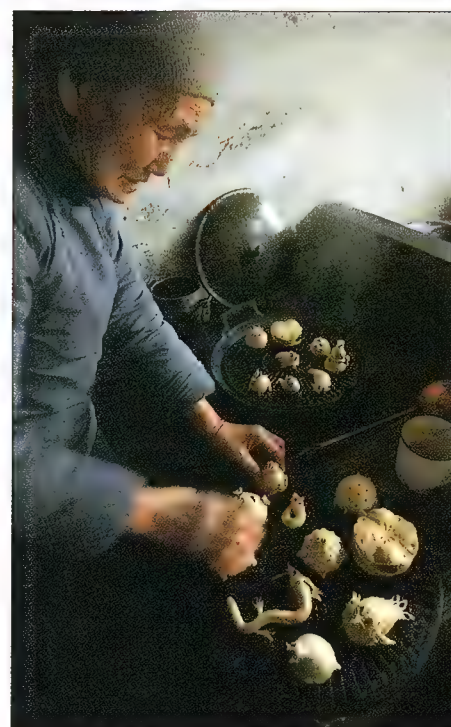
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feng hou, meaning, if run together, 'High official position and rich rewards'.

In the centre of this same beam we can identify a *tan* — a legendary creature rather like a unicorn. It has its head tilted back, its mouth wide open, as though trying to swallow the sun. This vivid carving illustrates a legend. The *tan* and the tiger were once both bent on becoming the king of the animals. A fierce battle developed between the two beasts of prey. Since neither could gain the upper hand, they asked the Jade Emperor, the supreme deity, to give his ruling once and for all. After deliberation, the Jade Emperor stated that whichever of the two could swallow the sun would become king. The two raced off at once



4



towards the sun. The *tan* was the faster runner but, over-eager to be king, it carelessly plunged into an abyss and was killed. Thus, in the end, it was the tiger which became the acknowledged king of the animals. The image of the *tan* therefore points a moral and warns against greed. As the Chinese proverb says, only contentment brings lasting happiness!

More than one hundred such exquisite carvings can be found in this courtyard. They include *dougong* carved in the shape of an elephant's head on the gate tower.

Translated by He Fei

Elephant-headed dougong on the gate tower (1), and an imp supporting a stone base (4). Women's quarters of the Ming and Qing dynasties (2). Steamed dough in animal and other shapes is traditionally prepared on New Year's Eve in Shanxi (3).

Motifs from Everyday Life: Farmers' Paintings from Liaoning

PHOTOS BY ZHAO CHAOXUN



Chinese 'farmers' paintings' — folk paintings produced by rural dwellers with little or no formal training — are attracting increasing interest. Part of the charm of these paintings lies in their direct, often naive approach, the use of bright colours and simple shapes, and the emphasis on everyday happenings. As descendants of popular folk crafts such as paper-cutting, embroidery and New Year pictures, they incorporate many of the design techniques of the latter.

Most attractive of all is the way in which local traditions and living conditions are reflected in the paintings. The themes and artistic treatment of the fishing community of the Shengsi Islands off the coast of Zhejiang (CHINA TOURISM no. 91), for example, are clearly different from those of the farmers of Jinshan County near Shanghai (CHINA TOURISM no. 56).

Very different again are the paintings reproduced here, the work of Manchu farmers of Xiuyan County in northeastern China's Liaoning Province. Although untutored, the artists are highly imaginative, and with their uninhibited, straightforward mentality their paintings are able to break through the constraints of time, space and logic. Executed in sharp lines and with bright, contrasting colours in poster paints, these pictures give an effect of naivety. Noticeable too is the use of a flat, 'cut-out' stylization or a 'bird-eye view' approach.

Brothers and Sisters Spring Artist: Li Qiang

In Xiuyan County there is a hot spring in the middle of which stands a large rock acting as a natural barrier between the 'female' and 'male' sides. During the summer months, people flock to bathe in the spring after the day's work to wash away their tiredness. This side of the bathing area, washerwomen spread the clothes they have just scrubbed clean on the grass to dry.

The exaggerated, stereotyped, but aesthetic naked bodies and the 'wide-angle' composition give this simple painting a modern look.

Sitting on Happiness

Artist: Gao Zhuo

When a Manchu girl marries, she must take off her shoes and sit on an axe placed on the *kang* (brick bed) in the nuptial chamber as soon as she enters her new husband's house. This signifies that she will be happy throughout her married life (in Chinese, the characters for 'axe' and 'happiness' have the same sound).

Even though we can only see the girl's back, we sense a shy gentleness. The bright reds enhance the feeling of festivity as the children peer excitedly through the window to catch a glimpse of the bride's face.



Mother-in-Law and Daughter-in-Law

Artist: Chen Baili

A young woman kneels before her husband's mother and tends to her hair, illustrating her traditional sense of filial duty but also something more — a genuine affection. The two are smiling and happy as the elderly woman's hair is shampooed in a tub and combed out with care.

This is a balanced composition, and the frame of luscious purple grapes seems to echo similar usage in a paper-cut or piece of embroidery; the effect is highly decorative.





Jade Tortoise of Longevity

Artist: Gao Zhuo

The traditional symbol for longevity in China is the tortoise, but farmers place all their hopes for a long life, blessings and good harvests on them. In this picture, craftsmen are carving a jade tortoise so enormous we know this can only be a flight of imagination on the part of the artist.

The painting is rendered absolutely 'flat'; we only deduce the three-dimensional dome of the tortoise's back when we notice that the workers are standing on benches and leaning forward to work on its curved sides.



Domestic Happiness

Artist: Luan Liangcai

Village elders usually lead a leisurely life, and those with grandchildren can look after and play with them to their heart's content while the parents are out in the fields.


Here, grandmother and grandchild are naively depicted, but the painting exudes a touching happiness and mutual love. The colour scheme is sober and restrained, and is reminiscent of the designs printed on locally made cotton fabric.




Translated by W. Lau

Pottery Finds from the Northern Dynasties

PHOTOS BY ZHENG YUNFENG
TEXT BY WANG KAI



This drummer shows the typically smooth outline of the Northern Dynasties with detail shown by means of incised lines in low relief. With his wide pantaloons gathered at the knee beneath a long tunic and his calm, confident smile, he makes a rounded and realistic impression.




Many of these funerary figures are redolent of domestic life, as is this example. The lady's pregnancy is accentuated by the style of her robe, with its crossover top, high waist and long sash. Standing firmly, her legs slightly apart, she has one hand placed lightly but protectively over her swelling belly.

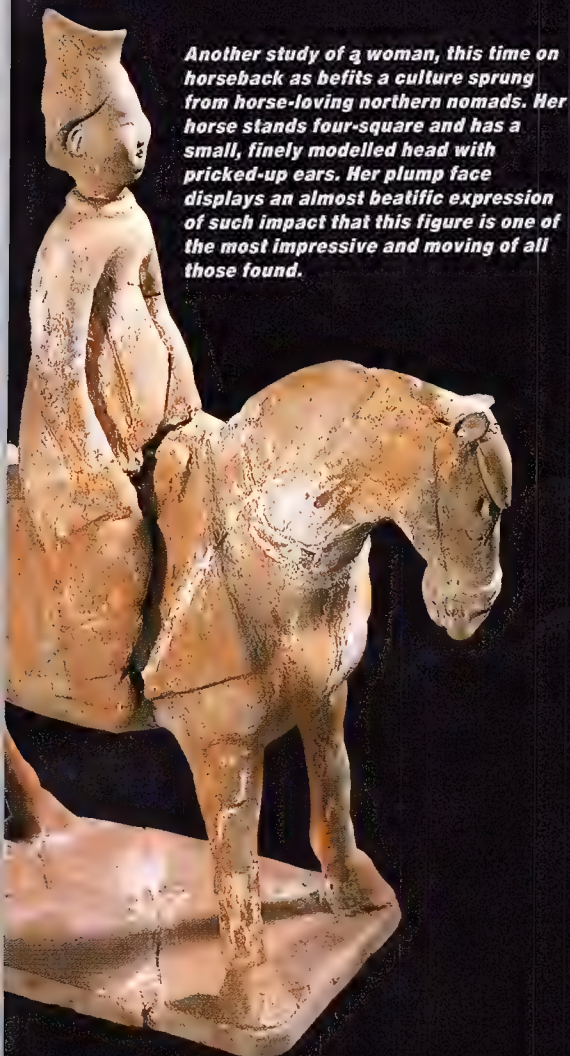
Following the collapse of the long, relatively stable Han dynasty (206 B.C.–A.D. 220), China was beset by constant wars and friction between a number of smaller states as well as by increasingly powerful tribes from the north. In the fourth century, the Toba clan of the nomadic Xianbei formed what became known as the Northern Wei dynasty (386–534), though it never managed to extend its power to the south, which remained in Han Chinese hands. Other states jointly categorized as the Northern Dynasties were the Eastern Wei (534–550), Western Wei (535–557), Northern Qi (550–577), and Northern Zhou (557–581). The Northern Wei, in particular, stand out for the artistic development produced under their patronage, influenced too by their furthering of the Buddhist faith. They were responsible for the great cave-temple complexes of the Yungang Grottoes at Datong in Shanxi and the Longmen Caves at Luoyang in Henan. But they were also quick to perceive the merits of integrating certain aspects of Han Chinese culture and administration, so that their art shows increasing sinicization.

During the Northern Dynasties, as in the Han, nobles or those of high social status were buried with everything they might need on their journey to paradise. Between 1985 and 1987, members of the archaeology team of the Xuzhou Museum were tidying up some thirty tombs dating from the Northern Dynasties in the eastern suburbs of Xuzhou, Jiangsu Province, when they unearthed more than one hundred pottery figures. Represented were many types of people of all social ranks, including cavalymen, musicians (often on seback), doorkeepers, civil officials, attendants and court ladies, but also horses, oxen, oxen drawing carts, other domestic animals, and poultry.

Inheriting the traditions of the Qin (221–207 B.C.) and Han dynasties, all these figures were made with moulds. The fine clay for each figure was divided into two and put into separate moulds for front and back. The head and body were often moulded separately and joined together later. After being dried for a while, the figures were baked in a kiln, then painted as appropriate. Even after all this time, the figures unearthed at Xuzhou still show traces of white slip and orange or red colour.

Although these appear to be somewhat cruder in execution and finish than examples found closer to the Northern Wei heartland further to the north and west, they demonstrate an elegance of line associated with the period as well as the typically passive, serene smile — a reflection of the peace of mind generated by a belief in Buddhism. 

Translated by Gu Weizhou



Another study of a woman, this time on horseback as befits a culture sprung from horse-loving northern nomads. Her horse stands four-square and has a small, finely modelled head with pricked-up ears. Her plump face displays an almost beatific expression of such impact that this figure is one of the most impressive and moving of all those found.

The doorkeeper, sixty centimetres high, epitomizes the simplified, elongated style of the Northern Dynasties. The slender figure wrapped in a cloak has both hands folded on the pommel of his sword, which manifests the greatest amount of incised detail. The exaggerated elongation somehow adds to this figure's dignity.



This is a work of art full of the sense of movement. The camel is captured in the act of kneeling down so that its handler can remove its heavy load. The proportions, the musculature, even the angle of the neck, reveal first-hand knowledge of camels, although Xuzhou is a long way southeast of their normal stamping grounds. Camels were in common use along the great trading routes of the time, and were themselves bred and traded by the northern nomads. Although it lacks the rich glaze, this figure can bear comparison with the better-known camel portraits from the later Tang dynasty (618-907).





This mythical beast would have been placed in the tomb passage to guard the entrance and protect the tomb's occupant against evil spirits. The most striking feature of the exotic sphinx-type creature with a flame-like mane is its human face, revealing an enigmatic mixture of influences. The sharply defined nose, full mouth and chin are clearly of the Graeco-Roman type associated with the Gandharan School of northern India and Central Asia, while the eyes are long and narrow. There was much intermingling of cultures in the northwestern oases along the Silk Road, and the tribes of the Northern Dynasties were great traders.

The bull, strong and fearless, stands rooted in mid-bellow, its horns raised as though in challenge. Unusually, it appears to have what looks like heavy armour on its back, although this may be a harness. This puts us in mind of the Warring States general who is said to have used enraged bulls as a weapon against the enemy, with great success!





Photo by Liao Ning

Dai Water-Splashing Festival

TEXT BY BING YI

*Like a thunderstorm long-brewing
Cold water suddenly cascades down;
The Water-Splashing Festival of the Dais
Continues round after round.*



Photo by Liu Changming

*The Dai girls' skirts as bright as peacocks
Swirl like colourful watered haloes.
When at length the glittering water stops,
Their beautiful figures are revealed
Wrapped in satiny light.*

*Hands, bowls, glasses are too small,
Basins, pails are so much better.
Plentiful water flows in a continuous stream,
Accompanied by peals of happy laughter.*

*Spring is welcomed in, winter is banished;
Even young monks seated in meditation
Come to join the blessing with water.
How can they resist the temptation?*




Photo by Zhang Xiao



Photo by Zheng Jie

The Water-Splashing Festival celebrated by the Dai people of Yunnan Province is a general term covering their Lunar New Year which falls in the sixth month of the Dai calendar (mid-April). The water-splashing ceremony itself occurs on the third day of the festival in the city of Jinghong, while Dai villagers in the rest of Xishuangbanna hold theirs a few days later.

In anticipation of the festivities, villagers decorate their doors with colourful paper-cuts, and traditional dishes are prepared for the feast. The varied programme of entertainment includes singing, dancing, fireworks, a dragon boat race and the launching of airborne lanterns. But the highlight is the water-splashing, in which everyone joins with enthusiasm, including the Dais' neighbours of other nationalities. All the participants, old and young alike, dress in their best and brightest clothes and proceed to splash water over each other with gay abandon. Spring has arrived at last and this is the Dai people's traditional method of washing away dirt and evil and wishing good fortune in the coming year to their family and friends.

For more on the colourful legend behind this festival (which has similarities with Thailand's Songkran Festival), please see CHINA TOURISM no. 63. 

Translated by Gu Weizhou



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(one in each category)

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(five in each category)

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- * Participants whose entries are selected for exhibition in Hong Kong will receive a certificate of entry and a souvenir.

RULES

- 1 The Grand Photo Contest is open to professional and amateur photographers from anywhere in the world.
- 2 Entries should consist solely of colour slides and colour prints. Entries produced by darkroom techniques are not acceptable.
- 3 Entries should not previously have appeared in any publication, or been exhibited or awarded prizes in any contest. The organizer reserves the right to disqualify entries or take back prizes awarded in case of infringement of this rule.
- 4 Each participant may submit up to a maximum of five entries in each category, using the form provided.
- 5 Colour prints should measure no less than 12.5 x 17.5 cm (5" x 7") and no more than 40 x 50 cm (16" x 20"). Slides should be mounted and the front should be marked with a red dot in the bottom right-hand corner.
The participant's name and address, as well as where the photo was taken and its title, should be marked on the back of each entry, as should the consecutive number in case of multiple entries.
- 6 The last date for entries to reach the organizer is May 20 1990, and late entries will not be accepted.
- 7 Envelopes containing entries should be marked "Grand Photo Contest" and sent to:
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17/F, V Heun Building
138 Queen's Road, Central
Hong Kong
or
H.K. China Tourism Press
Beijing Office
1 Beixinqiao Santiao Lane
(Post Code: 100007)
Dongchengqu
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China
- 8 The original slide or negative of winning or selected entries must be submitted to the organizer by the date specified, otherwise disqualification will follow.
- 9 The organizer will be entitled to use winning and selected entries in exhibitions and promotions or for related activities free of charge. However, a fee will be paid if entries are published in CHINA TOURISM.
- 10 All original slides and negatives will be returned on the conclusion of exhibitions, promotions and related activities. The organizer will handle entries with all due care, but will assume no responsibility for entries lost or damaged.
- 11 No participant may win more than one prize, with the exception of the Special Prize.
- 12 The panel of judges will be made up of top photographers and professionals in related fields.
- 13 The results will be published in the August 1990 edition of CHINA TOURISM (no. 122). Prize winners and selected entrants will be notified separately.
- 14 The organizer reserves the right to interpret the above rules as it sees fit and to amend them without further notice.

Grand Photo Contest Entry Form

Entry no. (please leave blank)

Name: Mr/Ms _____

Address: _____

Tel.: _____ (Please print)

Colour print category

Photo no.	Title	Location
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

Colour slide category

Photo no.	Title	Location
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

I agree to observe the rules and to abide by the judges' decision.

Signature _____

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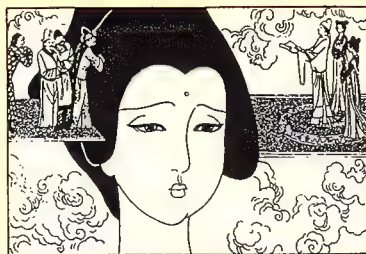
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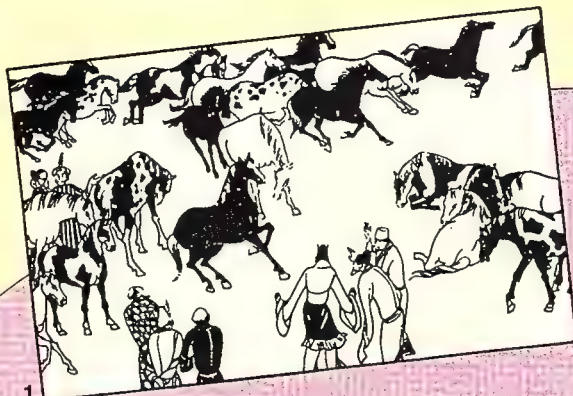
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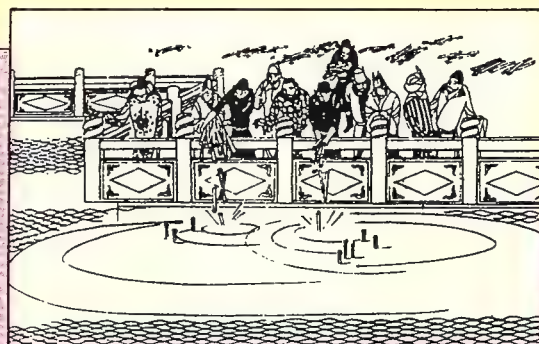
How Princess Wencheng

The story of how Princess Wencheng of the Tang imperial court came to marry King Songtsan Gambo of the Tibetan Tubo Kingdom is highly popular, appearing in countless folktales and in Tibetan opera.

As soon as the princess was deemed eligible for marriage, envoys from



1



4



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- 1 One hundred mares, each with a foal at heel, were separated from their young and the herd was mixed thoroughly. The envoys were asked to reunite each couple from the restless mass of horseflesh — a seemingly impossible task. Envoy after envoy conceded defeat.
- 2 But the Tibetan envoy, Mgar, ordered all the foals to be locked away in a separate courtyard overnight. The next morning, mad with hunger, each foal unerringly rushed to suckle its mother.
- 3 Next the envoys were asked to identify the upper and lower ends of one hundred identical lengths of sandalwood

(the lower end being that closest to the tree roots). The envoys pondered the problem without finding any solution....

- 4 But Mgar had all the wood dropped into a pond. The heavier lower ends sank, while the upper ends floated.
- 5 Yet another test involved inserting a red silk thread into a long winding passage through a large jade bead. The Persian envoy got into a frightful state trying, while the envoy from India did little better.
- 6 On a sudden brainwave, Mgar caught an ant and tied the thread around its body. After placing a bit of honey at the

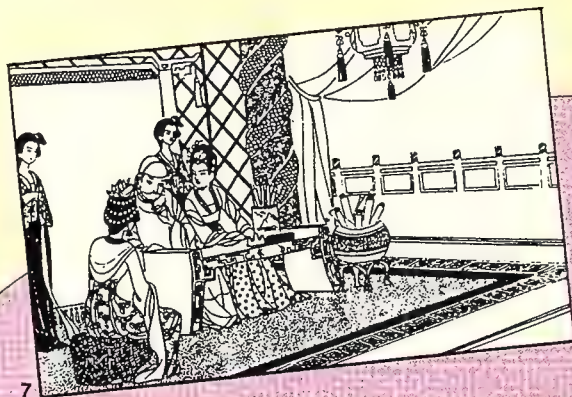
far end, he put the ant at the entrance to the hole and blew on it softly. Lured by the honey and desirous of escaping the pressure of Mgar's breath, the ant crawled through the tunnel, thereby threading the jade bead for the Tibetan envoy.

- 7 All this time the emperor, empress and princess watched and wondered. The final test was to involve Princess Wencheng herself. She and ninety-nine other court beauties, dressed in identical robes, were to gather in the imperial garden and the envoys would have to pick her out (never having seen her face before).

Hand Was Won

DRAWINGS BY GAO YAN

countries far and wide flocked to Chang'an (present-day Xi'an in Shaanxi), the capital, to try and win her for their rulers. They came in such numbers that her father Emperor Taizong (reign dates 627-649) decided to submit them to a series of tests to determine the winner.



7



10



8



11



9



12

On the eve of this crucial test, Mgar wandered around deep in thought. A court maid carrying a basketful of peaches tripped near him, spilling them all over the ground. Mgar helped her collect them, rubbing each peach clean with his sleeve. Deeply grateful and noting his furrowed brow, the maid asked if she could help in any way. On hearing his problem, she told him how to identify the princess but swore him to eternal secrecy for her own safety. The following day, each envoy was allowed to pass along the line of beauties once only. Mgar came last.

10 Having narrowed his choice down to four or five from a distance, Mgar was immensely relieved to finally spot the identifying mark confided by the maid-servant: Princess Wencheng had a faint red mole between her eyebrows. In addition, her skin's natural fragrance attracted bees and butterflies. Mgar bowed before her solemnly.

11 So it was settled; Wencheng would marry the Tibetan king. After lengthy preparations, taking many things both useful and decorative—silk, farm tools, seed grain, books and treatises—with them, the princess and her retinue set

off on the long and tiring journey to Tibet, arriving in 641.

12 Apart from introducing technical skills from Tang China, such as the use of a water-powered millstone to grind corn, as well as the gentler art of embroidery, Princess Wencheng was able to further the spread of Buddhism. The famous statue of the young Sakyamuni which she took with her from Chang'an was enshrined in Lhasa's Jokhang Temple, built especially for that purpose.

Translated by M.K.

Taken from *Princess Wencheng*, published by Chinese Folk Literature Publishing House

The Maiden Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma

Tibetan opera is said to date back in essence to the eighth century and Padmasambhava, the Indian Tantric master who was invited to Tibet by King Trisung Detsan. In 799, the Indian monk devised a ritual dance to exorcize evil and propitiate the gods on the completion of Samye Monastery. Some time in the fifteenth century, a lama called Tangdong Jyalbo interlaced the religious dance with episodes from folk tales and the Buddhist scriptures and added songs to make it more palatable to the common people. He is generally considered the 'father' of Tibetan opera. Later still, the fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682) decreed that this popular opera form should be performed separately from the religious dance form.

Tibetan opera consists of three parts. In the prologue, a narrator offers thanks to the gods and asks their blessings, then he discusses the plot and introduces the individual characters to the audience. The opera itself follows. The narrator explains the action in a rhymed monologue while the actors step out of their circle at the appropriate times to perform. Spoken parts are rare; mostly the performers sing, alternating with dancing. The opera can last anything from a few hours to a few days. The final part is the epilogue. Singing benedictions, the performers dance happily and present the audience with *hata* (ceremonial silk scarves).

Folk opera troupes can be found all over Tibet, as well as in the Tibetan areas of Qinghai, Sichuan and Yunnan, and performances are given in the open air, under awnings or in huge tents. There is no stage or scenery, and the musical accompaniment is simple: usually just drum and cymbals. Thirteen traditional operas are still extant, but only eight are now in the standard repertoire, including the one we present here. This popular opera, said to have been written by a lama, is also recorded in English as *Sukyi Nyima*.

In the old days, there was a country whose name, Sems-kyi-blo-gros, means "wisdom of thought." In this country there was a vast, deserted forest, overgrown with brambles, where wild animals roamed. In the forest was an extremely secluded lodge where a hermit lived and meditated in Buddhist austerity.

One day, the hermit saw that the white shawl he had been wearing had become dirty, and he washed it from the bank of the river. But unexpectedly, the dirt that was washed off the shawl flowed along in the water and was drunk by a female deer. The deer became pregnant, and from then on it did not go anywhere else to graze but wandered around the hermit's lodge every day.

The hermit was kind-hearted towards the deer. The months passed. One day, a hundred flowers blossomed, a hundred kinds of grass were luxuriant, a beautiful rainbow appeared in the sky and flowers fell like rain. The sound of

melodious music came faintly from some distant place. At this time, the deer gave birth to a beautiful, gentle maiden. The hermit was very fond of her and brought her up at his side. He named her "Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma."

Now, the king of Sems-kyi-blo-gros was Zla-ba-bde-dpon and the queen was Lha-yi-dpal-mo. They had two sons, the elder one was Zla-ba-seng-ge and the younger one, Zla-ba-blo-gros. As it happened, the two sons had heretical beliefs.

The country was very wealthy and had 36,000 large villages and towns and 95,000 storehouses of treasure. The palace roof was covered with gold tiles, which shone with radiance and dazzled the eye. There were heavenly horses that could fly up to the sky, rhinoceros that could dive into the sea, tame elephants and precious magic oxen and a parrot that could speak fluently and knew everything in the past and future. Indeed, the country enjoyed great wealth and prosperity and had everything that was desirable.

One day, King Zla-ba-bde-dpon brought together his ministers for a consultation. "Lions on the snow mountain might be hit by hurricanes and heavy snow, and tigers in the forest might be hurt by sharp knives and arrows. I, the king, am old and might die. Now I shall abdicate and turn over the throne to a prince. Who, in your opinion, is best suited to be king?"

After a short consultation, the ministers replied as one voice: "The elder prince, Zla-ba-seng-ge, is clever, benevolent and enjoys great popularity among the people. We are willing to have him as our king," and thus the decision was made.

On the day when Zla-ba-seng-ge ascended the throne, people all over the country came to congratulate him, conches and trumpets were blown to mark the occasion, and there was a scene of rejoicing and excitement. After ascending the throne, Zla-ba-seng-ge worshipped Mahadeva, the Great Heaven (the system of heretic beliefs worshipped in accordance with the former king's instructions).

One day when he was returning to his palace from a short journey, King Zla-ba-seng-ge met a bewitching coquettish maiden. At first sight, King Zla-ba-seng-ge was dazzled by her beauty. Unable to refrain from showing his feelings, he

stepped forward and asked her: "Maiden, you the daughter of a god, a dragon, or a human being? If you are not married yet, would you be willing to be my life companion?"

The bewitching maiden answered: "Honourable king, noble king, I am an orphan and would be very happy even to become your slave."

But one of the ministers in the king's company named A-po-nag-ge knew that she was not a demure maiden, as she seemed, and was afraid that she would make the king muddleheaded and bring disaster to the people. So he came forward to advise the king. "My honourable king, copper cannot be compared with gold, nor a mouse with an elephant. How can a maiden of unknown origin be married to the king?" The king did not listen or pay attention to these words, but placed the bewitching maiden behind him on his horse and returned to the palace. After that, inauspicious and ominous things often happened in the palace, putting everybody in a constant state of anxiety, wondering what was the cause. The parrot, whose magical powers advised the king on several occasions to keep apart from the bewitching maiden, who he said was the transformation of a demon. But, infatuated with her beauty, the king ignored the parrot's loyal advice. There was nothing anybody could do about the situation.

The king had a large garden and entrusted a hunter to guard it. One day when the hunter went into the garden he saw a herd of boars trample the flowers and trees there. The hunter became very angry and, carrying a bow and arrows, chased them. At the sight of the hunter the boars were panic-stricken and fled for their lives in different directions. The hunter chased closely after a large boar, but on the way he met a river deer. Giving up the boar, the hunter turned around to chase the river deer. After chasing for a long while, he met a David's deer. To the hunter, it was always the other mount that looked higher. He gave up the river deer once and chased closely after the David's deer. When he was on the point of catching up with it, he stretched his bow to the full and, with the whizz of an arrow, shot the David's deer.

The David's deer did not fall down but ran away faster instead. The hunter was unwilling to let it go and chased without noticing how far away he was from the palace. The David's deer ran deep into the forest, and the hunter entered in its wake. It was dusk. Finding himself lost and without catching any game, the hunter had to climb himself in a tree and went to sleep.

The next day, he got down from the tree and groped in the forest for a way to go back home. Dashing here and there, he could not find his way out of the forest, and there was nobody there to ask. Suddenly he came to a mirror-like pond and saw that a water bucket had been used on the bank. The hunter pondered: "It seems somebody must live nearby. I will wait for someone to come here, and inquire about the way to return home."



After a while, a maiden came from far away, and was as beautiful as a goddess, light as a willow, gentle as a flower and kind-hearted as a god of compassion. With a silver ladle in her right hand and a gold water bucket in her left hand, she walked towards the pond. When she was near, the hunter stepped forward and cried, "Divine maiden, you look like a goddess. I am King Zla-ba-seng-ge's gardener. Yesterday you lost my way in my chase after wild animals. Please be merciful and show me the direction to your home." The maiden gave him a handful of lucky grass and told him to scatter it on the path so that he would get home without question.

The hunter scattered the lucky grass on the path and indeed returned to the palace. He immediately went to see the king.

But the king was playing merrily with his many concubines, and the hunter found it difficult to tell his story in plain language. So he told a riddle:

"Honourable king, you can tie down the Seven-Sister Star in heaven if you have the goddess-binding rope; you can get the treasures of the dragon palace in the sea if you know how. Noble king, just look at my face and you'll understand."

When the king heard the hunter's riddle, he guessed that the hunter must have found a good maiden for him. So he went in disguise to the hunter and asked more about his story. What he learned made him very happy, and he went with the hunter all the way along the path scattered with lucky grass, in search of the maiden.

The hunter and the king ran all the way until they were breathless. Finally, they arrived at the edge of the pond where the hunter had been the previous day. After a while, the maiden appeared. When the king gazed at her carefully, he found her indeed beautiful beyond compare. The queen and concubines in his palace all seemed as dust to him. So he stepped forward and spoke to her: "Lovely, goddess-like, beautiful maiden, I am King Zla-ba-seng-ge. At my first sight of you I could not tear myself away from you!" He had not finished his words before the maiden ran off, disappearing in an instant like a young deer that had met a hunter. The king and the hunter were helpless and had to step into a tree beside the pond for another night.

The following day when the maiden came to fetch water, the king stepped forward again to speak to her:

"Lha-mo (angel) in the forest! If you promise to become my queen, you will live in a palace of comfort, wear silks and satins, eat many kinds of fruits, drink liquid sweet as dew, and watch dances in costumes in a riot of colours and listen to celestial music. My country has 36,000 large villages and towns, heavenly steeds that can soar across the skies, rhinoceros that can dive into the sea. No wealth, rank and prosperity in the world is higher and greater than mine. Maiden, won't you go along with me?"

The maiden listened and dipped up water in silence. When the bucket was full, she again ran and vanished in an instant, just like the day before. Later, following her footsteps, the king indeed the hunter chased after her up to a hermit's hatched shed.



This hermit had profound religious attainments and was leading a life of meditation and austerity. The king quickly knelt, bowed and paid him homage. He told the hermit in detail the purpose of his arrival and asked for his help. The hermit said, "The maiden you met is probably my adopted daughter Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma. She is the incarnation of the goddess who came down to earth after having borrowed the womb of a female deer as the site of pregnancy. It will not be difficult for you to marry her and make her your queen. If you can give up the heretic beliefs you formerly worshipped and be converted to Buddhist teaching, your wish will be fulfilled."

Hearing this, the king was overjoyed, kowtowed many times and promised to give 500 ounces of gold to support the hermit. He pledged to reject all heretic beliefs and be converted to Buddhism from then on.

The hermit called Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma to his side and instructed her: "My child! Now you are going away to become the queen and spread the Buddhist teachings. No greater beneficence can be achieved. This is a marriage destined by your previous incarnation. Later, some vicious people will plot against you. I am giving you a necklace that will ward off evil spirits and subdue demons. You must wear it carefully on your body and never tell anyone about it, not even your husband. In this way you'll enjoy happiness and security all your life."

King Zla-ba-seng-ge returned with Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma to the palace and immediately conferred on her the title of queen. They were a very affectionate couple, enjoying deep conjugal love. The king forgot all about his former queen and concubines.

Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma was honest, tolerant and kind-hearted. She was simple and always spoke gently, winning the admiration and esteem of ministers and people all over the country.

The king's former 2,500 concubines were very jealous of Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma, but especially envious was the bewitching woman brought back by the king some time ago. They often gathered to plot against Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma. The bewitching woman played the chief role in the plot. They found on the street a witch named Yamangende, a woman with a good command of magic and vicious tricks. Ordinarily she went to this family and that in the streets. She was skilful at playing wind and stringed instruments, singing and dancing and excelled in cunning, mischievous schemes. It is difficult to say how many crimes she had committed.

After the 2,500 concubines had found Yamangende, they prized her as a treasure. In particular, the bewitching woman entertained her with most generous hospitality. Finally, she

proposed that the witch try to kill Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma. Without hesitation, the witch, beating her chest, guaranteed that Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma would die at her hand.

Yamangende, carrying a twelve-stringed instrument, sang and performed at the gate of the palace. King Zla-ba-seng-ge heard her and sent attendants to fetch her into the palace for a performance. The witch demonstrated all her skills, playing so melodiously as to pierce the clouds and split rocks and dancing as gracefully as if many golden snakes were swirling. The king was much pleased and sent her to wait upon Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma.

As soon as she saw Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma, Yamangende, with a tongue like a snake, flattered her with an extravagantly colourful description of the sky raining flowers. The witch instantly won her heart and Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma took her as a bosom friend.

That very night, the witch secretly placed paper with magic incantations and different kinds of poison in the palace where Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma lived. She thought that the queen would die, become insane or fall ill. But, to her astonishment, on the following day when the witch went to Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma's palace, she found her as healthy and serene as ever. Because Yamangende had boasted of her power, she was both angry and impatient. She could think of nothing else to do, so she chatted quietly with Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma and said in a soft voice, "I think you should take good care of yourself! Somebody may be jealous of you and secretly plot against you!"

Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma was very grateful to her and replied with great assurance, "Dear friend, thank you for your attentions. I am not afraid of anybody's secret plotting because I have a pearl necklace to protect me!" When Yamangende went back to the bewitching woman she told her to take out some pearls quickly and thread them into a necklace. The following day she took it to Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma and said hypocritically: "You are really lucky to have a magic pearl necklace. It's because you did charitable and pious deeds and formed ties of kindness in your previous incarnation. Would you please take off the necklace and let me do homage to it? It would be a charitable deed on your part to let it bestow some blessing on me!"

Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma forgot the hermit's instructions. Besides, she should not have indiscreetly trusted the witch and taken the pearl necklace from her neck. Yamangende pretended to be astonished at its beauty, stroked it over and over again and stealthily replaced it with the fake pearl necklace she had brought. Then she took out a magic drug and spread it, making Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma unconscious as if she were drunk.

The scheming witch carried a human corpse from the graveyard that very night, cut it into halves and put the internal organs by Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma's pillow, and smeared human blood on her face and hands while she was sleeping. Only then did the witch sneak away. Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma knew nothing about all this.

The following day when the sun shone over the snow mountain, King Zla-ba-seng-ge did not see Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma and thought that she had fallen ill. He hastened to visit her at the palace

where she lived. As soon as he entered the room, he was stunned by the sight of blood and flesh. Then he saw Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma's face stained with blood and there was still a trace of blood on her mouth. With anger rising in his breast, he said: "I thought you were a goddess. Suddenly, I find you a demon. I will send you to the nether world!" With that, he lifted his sword and was going to slash her. Suddenly, the parrot with magical powers flew to his side, shouting aloud: "Don't be rash! Don't be rash!" The king asked, "Would it be rash if I killed this demon?"

The parrot said: "Let me tell you a story: In the old days, a hunter went hunting in the hills. On his way, he was both hungry and thirsty. Suddenly a spring flowed down in front of him. The hunter was very pleased and hurriedly ran forward to drink the water. At that moment a crow flew to his side, flapping its wing against his eyes, and repeatedly prevented him from drinking the water. The hunter was extremely angry, strung an arrow to his bow and shot the crow dead. Later on, he turned over the matter in his mind: Why did the crow try to prevent me from drinking the water? There must be something queer in this! So he went to inspect the upper current of the spring and saw that a snake was dripping poisonous saliva, drop by drop, into the water. Only then did the hunter realize that he should not have killed the crow."

The king said, "According to what you have said, I should be more careful!" So he wakened Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma, who, as if waking from a dream, knew nothing about what had happened.

A few days later, Yamangende again came to Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma's presence and made her fall into unconsciousness with a magic drug, the same as before. Then she cut off the nose of the king's favourite elephant, put it beside Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma's pillow and smeared her face, hands and mouth with fresh blood, and sneaked away. The following day, King Zla-ba-seng-ge heard that the elephant's nose had been cut off and saw Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma's bloodstained face. Filled with anger, he again pulled out his sword and was going to kill her. Just then the magic parrot flew to his side again, saying: "Don't be rash!" Then it told the following story: "In old days, a woman went uphill hunting and left her child at home for the family cat to look after. When she was gone, a huge python came and tried to eat the child. The cat wrestled desperately with the python and bit and killed it. When the woman returned, the cat went outdoors to greet her. As soon as she saw its mouth and claws covered with blood, she thought that the cat had eaten her child. In a surge of anger she killed the cat with an axe. When she went into her house she saw the dead python and her child safe and sound. Only then it dawned on her that she had done something wrong."

After the king heard this story, he put down his sword and wakened Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma. Again she felt as if she had come from a dream and knew nothing about what had happened.

A few days later, Yamangende came again to the queen and made her unconscious with a magic drug. Then she stealthily went and killed the king's younger brother, Zla-ba-blo-gros, put

his heart by Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma's pillow and smeared her face, mouth and hands with blood. Then she sneaked away.

When King Zla-ba-seng-ge saw his beloved brother killed and eaten by Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma, he could no longer restrain himself, but just as he was drawing the sword to kill her, the parrot with magic powers again flew to his side to plead for her. But this time, the king scolded without allowing it time to speak: "You, damned devil, have always fooled me with sweet words. Listening to you, I have lost my beloved younger brother. If I listen to your words again, I am afraid both my country and my life will be in danger." With these words, he pierced the parrot with his sword and killed it.

But as he looked at Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma's flower-like countenance and recalled the days of their wedded love, the king could not bring himself to kill her with his own hands, no matter how hard he tried. Consequently he ordered three butchers to take her to the Sea of Seething Blood to be tormented.

The three cruel butchers escorted Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma to the Sea of Seething Blood. Along the way, people of all the villages and towns were sympathetic to her misfortunes and stood on the roadside to greet and comfort her. Some even expressed their determination to go to the capital to plead on her behalf. If necessary, they said, they would kill several villains to redress the injustice and avenge her. Some elderly people felt sorry for her, beating their breasts and stamping their feet. But Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma consoled them one by one, telling them not to feel sorry for her and that rights and wrongs, truth and falsehood, were bound to be clarified in the long run. Walking behind the three butchers, she went on towards the Sea of Seething Blood.

On the way, the two younger of the three butchers began to think they should not do such an unkind and unjust act, that it would indeed be a sin to let righteous Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma be tormented. So they sneaked away and left it to the old butcher to do the inhuman deed alone. Obsessed with the desire for gain, the old butcher wanted to win a prize from the king, so he escorted Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma right to the edge and, tying her up with ropes, he threw her into the filthy, stinking Sea of Seething Blood.

Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma underwent all sorts of torment in the Sea of Seething Blood but in her heart she prayed: "My esteemed Triratna (the triad of the Buddha, the dharma, and the sangha), I am in torment and suffering here, hit

by misfortune for an unknown reason in disastrous months of the year. I wish to experience all human suffering. I wish all of people could be free of disaster. I wish all living creatures would always love one another and enjoy peace and happiness."

Her devotion moved all the local guard deities and they all came to protect her, and helped her get out of the Sea of Seething Blood and once again walk along the road that led to the capital. She disguised herself as a nun and on her way expounded Buddhist scriptures and teachings and spread Buddhist philosophy. What a great number of people were inspired by her and converted to Buddhism! Her reputation spread farther and farther. Even people in the capital heard of this nun of profound purity and her good command of Buddhist scriptures and teachings.

Meanwhile, since King Zla-ba-seng-ge had driven Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma away, unlucky omens often appeared in the palace and drought and famine followed. Avalanches, landslides, floods and locusts plunged the country into an abyss of misery and chaos. When the king heard the nun of profound spirituality had arrived, he went in disguise with the hunter and minister A-po-nage-ge to listen to her expounding Buddhist teachings. At the same time, the scheming consort and the witch Yamangende also came to give alms to the nun so as to purge their deadly sins they had committed. But none of them knew that the nun was Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma against whom they had plotted in former times. The king and the others saw the consort and Yamangende kneeling at the feet of the nun and make confessions. They hid themselves nearby to listen; thus they heard the two women, with tears of repentance, how they had planned and carried out their scheme, how the witch cheated Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma to get the magic pearl necklace and how she killed the young prince. When Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma heard this confession, tears streamed down her face as she was choked with sobbing. At that moment King Zla-ba-seng-ge, who listened nearby, bristled with anger, and his rage spread like forest fire. He stepped forward, grasped the consort and the witch and drew his sword to kill them. Luckily, Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma bravely came forward and prevented the king from doing so, saying, "Your Majesty, you are brave as a lion and as perfect as the full moon. Let bygones be bygones, like the drifting sands. We should look to the future and all things will grow as bountifully as green grass. Fortunately, thanks to the Buddha's protection, I escaped from the vicious plot unscathed. Today I am here, safe and sound. Please forgive them and let them mend their ways!"

When the king saw that the nun was Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma, he was astonished and overjoyed, though he was also ashamed. At his repeated entreaties, she agreed to return to the palace and once again became queen. Later she gave birth to a crown prince named Nyi-ma-seng-ge. From then on, withered trees blossomed, men and animals thrived and people all over the land led a happy life.

Taken from *Tales from Tibetan Opera*, edited and narrated by Wang Yao, Professor of Tibetology, and reproduced by kind permission of New World Press, Beijing



Folk Remedies from



Common Cooking Ingredients

In the *Inner Classic of the Yellow Emperor*, compiled between the fourth and first centuries B.C., China's earliest theoretical medical text, the foundations of the origin, development, prevention and treatment of disease and illness are laid down. Emphasis is on prevention rather than radical cure, and on dietotherapy as the basis for maintaining normal good health as well as for overcoming illness.

Dietotherapy was developed further in the Han dynasty (206 B.C.–A.D. 220). *Shen Nong's Classic of Herbolgy*, compiled during that period, deals exclusively with the nature, flavour, action and growing place of medicinal herbs and plants. Of the varieties listed, quite a few are common fruits and foods, illustrating the point that traditional Chinese medicine did not – and does not – make any hard and fast distinction between medicine and food. Many common foods act as medicines when necessary and many specific medicines are also commonly used foodstuffs. Among these we can list apricot kernels, Chinese red dates, Chinese prickly ash, cinnamon, garlic, ginger, mung beans, onions, rice, sesame and vinegar.

Taking just two of these we look at how, even today, they can quickly become folk remedies.

Ginger

Every Chinese household will have some ginger root in the kitchen, either for use as a spice or to counteract unpleasantly strong cooking smells. But ginger is also a useful remedy to have on hand when travelling.


Please note that the ginger referred to below is generally raw root ginger. The older root (in other words, not the young, tender, often pinkish type) is preferred for medicinal purposes.

- Slices of fresh raw ginger can be chewed to prevent nausea.
- A thin rice porridge (congee) with ginger root juice can stop vomiting.
- A decoction of boiling water with slivers of raw ginger and an equal weight of brown sugar boosts the circulation and can cure a cold, drunk hot.
- In case of faintness as a result of summer heat or from eating bad food, the person affected should be given a bowl of ginger soup.
- Cut a piece of ginger root into slivers and place in a cup of hot black Chinese tea. Several cups should cure diarrhoea.
- When travelling through a forest area with damp, cold air, a sliver of ginger root held in the mouth can prevent any ill effects (this sort of forest air is the 'evil cold' type feared by traditional Chinese).
- In case of swelling, chop up ginger root and mix with a small amount of salt, then wrap the lot in a piece of gauze. Immerse in cold water, then rub it on the affected part. Repeat at least twice a day.
- Ginger is also good for hiccups. Crush a quantity of raw ginger in a mortar, squeeze out the juice and add honey. Take one teaspoonful two to three times daily.

Garlic

Garlic is as common an ingredient in Chinese cooking as in the cuisines of the Mediterranean. It is claimed to have all kinds of health benefits: according to traditional Chinese medicine, it can speed up the digestive process, kill bacteria, dissolve poisons, and so on. Contemporary medicine has confirmed that garlic contains many beneficial substances, including vitamins A, B and C and many minerals, as well as the volatile oil, allicin. The following are again common remedies.

- Before leaving on a trip, prepare a slice of garlic and stick it on the navel with adhesive bandage or tape. This is said to reduce sea-sickness or travel sickness in general.
- If a person faints as a result of the heat, crush a clove of garlic and dilute its juice with cold water. This should be carefully dripped into the nostrils.
- For diarrhoea, colitis, bacillary dysentery, etc., crush a clove of garlic and place it in a glass of hot water. The drink should kill bacteria.
- In case of food-poisoning, eat three to five cloves of garlic.
- In case of vomiting, crush garlic and mix it with honey and hot water to bring about an improvement of symptoms.
- In case of mosquito or centipede bites, chop up garlic finely and apply the paste to the bite. This will reduce swelling and dissolve the poison.
- Three to five cloves of garlic should be eaten every day for several consecutive days to prevent epidemic cerebrospinal meningitis during the winter and spring.

N.B.: The above are all with RAW garlic. The normal practice is to chew a few tea-leaves or a twig of mint afterwards! 

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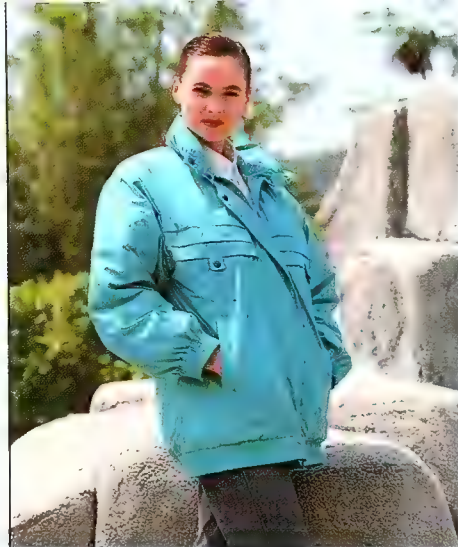
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SCOPE OF BUSINESS

1. FOREST PRODUCTS:

Candles, X'mas gifts, plush toys, sesame oil, fireworks and fire-crackers, hardware, flowers, birds, fish, bamboo leaves, etc.

2. JUTE AND PLASTIC PRODUCTS:

Jute bags, jute cloth, jute yarn, degummed ramie, ramie top, pp/jute mixed bags, pp woven bags, woven polymesh bags; coated pp woven cloth, paper mulberry bark, plastic products, etc.

3. DRIED FRUITS & VEGETABLES:

Dehydrated vegetables, dried chillies, honey, feedstuffs, dried mushrooms, dried black fungus, dried day lilies and other edible fungus, dried dates, ginkgo nuts pickled mustard tuber, salted cucumber, etc.

4. BAMBOO & WOODEN PRODUCTS:

Logs, timber, fibreboard, wooden chopsticks and various wooden products and furniture, woven bamboo products such as curtains, birdcages, brooms, etc.

5. CARPETS & RUGS:

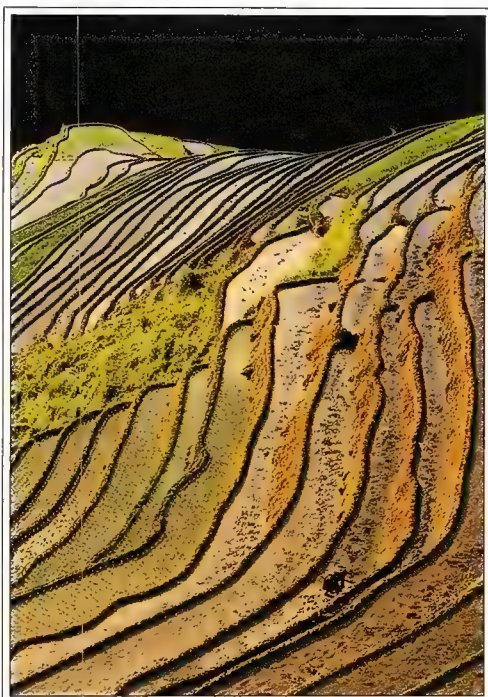
"Peony & Phoenix" brand silk carpets, woollen carpets, hooked rugs, full cut rugs with latex back, cotton waste rugs and "Swan" brand velvet rugs.

6. ANIMAL BY-PRODUCTS:

Leather and fur garments, leather slippers, leather espadrilles, bristle brushes, bristles, down garments, down quilts, down and feather products, casings and other animal by-products.



Photography



This photo was shot in the spring from a high vantage point to give prominence to the field graduations. The lens aperture was as narrow as possible to give a greater depth of field (by Chan Pak Keung).

In recent years photographers from the Hong Kong W.K. Lam Oi Boys Photographic Association have twice visited a mountainous area inhabited by the Zhuang minority in the Longsheng Ge Autonomous County north of Guilin in northeast Guangxi. They were particularly fascinated by the terraced fields there.

Such fields are full of beauty of lines since they are built up the mountain, one on top of the other, and formed by embankments of earth which seem to flow along the contours of the slope. In some places there are hundreds and thousands of terraces. Apart from picturesque photographs, you can also gain an insight into the laborious reclamation of land carried out over generations.

Tips:



A wide-angle lens was used to underline the impression of slope after slope of field terraces, again in the springtime (by Lo Kwok Leung).

Longsheng is a favoured destination because it has the largest area of terraces at the highest altitude, with a very wide variety of types and shapes. It is therefore often considered the best place in China to photograph terraced fields.

The best season for such photography depends on which part of the agricultural cycle you wish to capture on film. Some of the terraced fields are only two metres wide and must be tilled by man, not by ox. There is great intensity of labour involved. Owing to the prevailing climate, fields here yield only a single crop, so sowing, planting and harvesting are all done only once a year.

The plentiful rainfall in spring irrigates the fields. Sowing begins in May or June (traditionally, on the third day of the fifth lunar month, a time known as Grain in Ear). Autumn is the harvesting season, after which the fields are allowed to rest and recover their strength with fertilizer.

The photographic association believes that the best photography season in Longsheng is spring, when the fields are covered with

water. There are lots of reflections, showing clearly the irregular lines of the terraces. The second-best season is autumn, when the crops are piled high in the fields, presenting scenes which are no less beautiful.

When the fields are full of rice seedlings and there are no reflections on the surface of the water, the degree of contrast is reduced. As the crops grow to maturity they become as tall as the terraces, obscuring their lines. The golden yellow of ripe plants is identical to the colour of the soil, negating any dramatic contrast.

As to the best time of day, morning and late afternoon, when the sun is at an angle of forty-five degrees, are best for pictures. Shooting towards the light enhances the reflections, making high contrast possible. However, one must be on guard against the glare caused by strong direct sunlight. For autumn pictures, slanting sunlight and crosslights can be used to enhance the effect.

There is plentiful rainfall in spring, so there are frequent cloudy days. But, even when there is no sun, you can still get pictures with good contrast as the degree of reflection of the water on the terraced fields is great. Without a key light source, however, you must pay attention to cloud formations in order to produce an interesting

Terraced



The dramatic effect was achieved with a telephoto lens. The exposure was calculated according to the patches of water, thereby under-exposing the surroundings (by Wong Ming Fat).

picture. If the light source is too strong, the sky will become a mass of grey or white. If the day is overcast, with thin cloud, objects will be blurred. Therefore it is vital to keep a good balance between thick and thin cloud. Clouds move very quickly, so one must be careful to choose the right moment.

Physical drawbacks to photography in Longsheng and its surrounding areas are the sheer size of the terraces; there are

thousands of them! The higher one climbs, the steeper it gets. A good tip is to climb straight up to the highest position, where you have a good overall view of the fields and can select the best spot from which to take pictures. This will save time and energy in the long run.

As regards the sort of camera equipment needed, the possibilities are endless. However, bulky equipment is difficult to carry and will exhaust the photographer who has to climb up and down the slopes all day. A wide-angle lens can take in more of the terraced fields, while a telephoto lens is needed to emphasize the lines of terraces. A tripod, of course, would be very useful if one can manage the weight.

There are certain tricks of composition which will bring out the special features of such fields, the way in which they are built terrace by terrace up the mountain. For example, the picture should be taken from a high place. It is then possible to take in a wider area and strengthen the reflection of the water in the fields, giving prominence to curving lines. The light and shade of slopes and valleys is also more pronounced.

The Longsheng area is interesting for more than its terraced fields. Many minority nationalities live in Guangxi, such as the Yao, Zhuang, Miao and Dong, whose daily life and living conditions differ widely. Their houses are all made from China fir, joined together by tenon and mortise without a single nail or rivet. Pictures of such dwellings can be very interesting, as can studies of the activities of the householders.

Translated by He Fei

Fields LAM KIN FAI



This shot was taken in autumn, when the fields had turned golden-green. The crops drying on racks in the village houses emphasize the golden colour (by Wong Ming Fat).

Tibetan Jewellery



Tibetans, especially herdspeople and nomads and in particular those from eastern Tibet and Qinghai Province (where these photos were taken), are traditionally very fond of wearing personal ornaments and jewellery. These are made of precious or semi-precious materials such as amber, coral, turquoise, agates, pearls, shell, jadeite and ivory and are set in gold or — more commonly — silver.

It used to be said that a young girl would not leave her room unless she was wearing several striking necklaces. A young man would not be regarded with respect unless he had a silver ear-ring set with a precious stone in his left ear.

Most of the jewellery worn by Qinghai Tibetans is characterized by its chunky, exotic look and its careful workmanship. Women wear more jewellery than men, but the latter see nothing unmanly in thus adorning their person. Items include not only the more usual rings, bracelets, ear-rings, necklaces, sundry hair ornaments, and strings of beads and coins worn on bands round the waist or down the back, but also snuff-boxes, amulets and charm-boxes, flint pouches and prayer-beads. Dagger belts and hilts may also be finely worked and set with stones and precious metals.

Photos & Text by Tse Shi Fan





Religious Art of Tibet



In Tibet, shrines and monasteries with incense burning and pilgrims paying homage can be seen in busy towns as well as in the remote countryside. Tibetan art inevitably reflects the deep religious beliefs underlying the entire culture of the region.

The monasteries were artistic centres in the past and still contain the major artworks of Tibet today. A monastery usually encompasses many halls, courtyards and linking galleries and corridors, and its roofs and eaves are decorated with gold or gilt-bronze statues and images drawn from Buddhist lore.

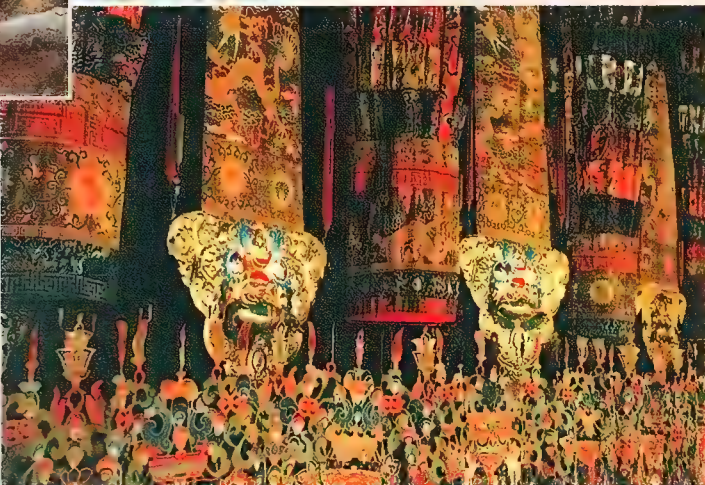
The generally dark interiors are enlivened by wall-paintings and *thangkas*, paintings executed on a scroll of cloth. Such paintings can be small or enormous; at their largest, *thangkas* have to have a special viewing wall built outdoors from which they are hung and exposed for the devout to pay their respects once or twice a year, as at Tashilhunpo Monastery.

Tibetan paintings in general are characterized by their rich iconography and symbolism and by the vivid palette of colours used. It can take the viewer quite some time to fully appreciate and 'read' paintings of this type since, meticulously detailed, they may portray the entire hierarchy of Tibetan mystics, monks and saints in addition to the more usual stories and incidents from the life of Sakyamuni, the historical Buddha. Other common themes are transmigration and the Tibetan 'wheel of life' as well as *mandala*, mystic diagrams used to assist in meditation.

In the open air, often in the vicinity of a monastery or shrine, one finds another type of art — rock paintings, often incorporating carvings. The themes are kept simple: individual portraits of Sakyamuni, Chenrezi (Avalokitesvara), and other Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and leading religious figures of Tibetan Buddhism, stylized so that the illiterate will recognize them immediately. Or a few lines of a sutra may be carved in bas-relief and picked out in bright colours on the natural rock.

Like the clusters of prayer-flags which everywhere flutter from roofs and hillsides, from bridges and alongside roads, so the landscape of Tibet is dotted by piles of flat mani stones. Some rise to form a wall or chorten, others are incorporated singly into the wall of a building. But all of them bear a scriptural inscription or a Buddhist motif to remind the faithful and greet the gods. The most frequent inscription is the mantra *Om mani padme hum* (Hail to the jewel in the lotus).

Photos & Text by Li Shiping



Tibet's Lakes ...

Tibet is blessed with a multitude of lakes (the Tibetan word is *co*) of many different sizes. The lakes seem to strike the eye with particular force here, set as they are in an immensity of brownish-yellow with snow-covered mountains in the background. Under the sun they shine a true sapphire blue.

Apart from the 'holy of holies', Mapam Yumco, and its sinister twin, La'nga Co, in western Tibet — already dealt with in our Special Features section — the most famous of Tibet's lakes are Nam Co, Yamzho Yumco and Bangong Co.

Nam Co, seventy kilometres from east to west and thirty from north to south, has a total area of 1,920 square kilometres and lies at 4,718 metres above sea-level. It is the highest salt lake in the world (Lake Qinghai in the province of that name being the second highest, but even larger). It is fed by glacier melt from the Nyainqêntanglha Mountains. As one of Tibet's three holy lakes, it is a favoured site of pilgrimage. Around it one finds red, white and yellow *mani* stones inscribed with Buddhist sutras, as well as similarly inscribed yak and sheep bones.

The lake is accessible from Damxung, a county town on the Qinghai-Tibet Highway, 153 kilometres north of Lhasa. Nam Co lies a further forty-eight kilometres northwest of Damxung, beyond the Nyainqêntanglha

Mountains. There is no public transport and the road is rough, so it is necessary to arrange a four-wheeled-drive vehicle.

Yamzho Yumco, famed for its glowing turquoise waters, is a freshwater lake. It lies 170 kilometres southwest of Lhasa on the south bank of the Yarlung Zangbo, at an altitude of 4,441 metres. It has an area of 638 square kilometres. Its outline is so irregular — almost like a scorpion — that you can never see it all, even from a high vantage point. This too is a holy lake, its name meaning 'corals'. It is home to a species of scaleless fish with very succulent flesh; there are a couple of fishing villages on its shore. It is also the location of Sangding Monastery, now deserted, but the one-time seat of the only female incarnation in Tibet.

For views of the lake, take the road from Lhasa to Xigazê via Nagarzê and Gyangzê. Yamzho Yumco comes into sight dramatically once you are over the Kampala Pass, the traditional frontier between Front and Back Tibet. On a good day you may even see the distant chain of the Himalaya.

Bangong Co lies in the far northwest of Tibet in Ngari District. Set at 4,242 metres above sea-level, the extraordinarily long, thin lake covers an area of 413 square kilometres and stretches through into Ladakh, now administered as part of Kashmir. It contains several islands with large bird colonies, including wild geese and seagulls. Travellers along the Xinjiang-Tibet Highway find it takes more than an hour to pass along the lake's shores.





... Mountains

The majority of mountains in China exceeding an altitude of 5,500 metres are actually to be found in Tibet, as befits its nickname 'the roof of the world'.

Most of the mountain ranges in Tibet run more or less east and west, such as the Kunlun, the Karakoram, the Tanggula, the Gangdisê, the Nyainqêntanglha and, last but by no means least, the Himalaya. Basically, only the Hengduan Range in Tibet's south-eastern corner runs along a markedly north-south axis.

The **Himalaya** sprawl in an arc right across the south of Tibet, the concentration of highest peaks falling along the Sino-Nepalese border. With a length of 2,400 kilometres and 200 to 300 kilometres wide, the range has an average altitude of more than 6,000 metres above sea-level. More than fifty of its peaks are over 7,000 metres high, and there are eleven 8,000-metre-plus giants. Within Tibet, for example, we can mention Lhozê (Lhotse) at 8,516 metres, Qowowuyag (Cho Oyu) at 8,201 metres; Xixabangma (Gosainthan) at 8,012 metres, and the highest mountain in the world, Qomolangma (Everest), at 8,848 metres.

In Tibetan, *qomo* means 'mother of the world' and *langma* 'mother'. Thus the mountain is named 'holy mother'. At this altitude, the summit temperature hovers between -30 and -40°C. As a result of the high winds, the mountain's face is often bare of snow in the midst of white all around. There is usually a streamer of cloud over the peak which mountaineers use to assess the speed and direction of the wind.

The Himalaya have the highest snowline in the world and are said to have more than 17,000 glaciers. The best place from which to view them from inside Tibet is Tingri in

Xigazê District, on the road between Lhazê and the Nepalese border. You can also get good views of Xixabangma along the Sino-Nepalese Highway just north of the border.

The **Gangdisê** and **Nyainqêntanglha** stretch across southern Tibet from Ngari District in the west to Qamdo District in the east in a continuation of the Karakoram Range. The principal peak of the Gangdisê is Kangrinboqê (6,656 metres) near Burang in Ngari District. Because of its great sanctity, not just for Tibetans, it has never been climbed.

The **Karakoram**, which form the border between China and Kashmir and Pakistan, only touch the extreme northwestern corner of Tibet. They have the distinction of being the second highest range after the Himalaya, with an average altitude of 6,000 metres above sea-level. Mount Qogir (8,611 metres) — better known to Western mountaineers as K2 or Godwin Austen — on the border between Kashmir and Xinjiang is the second highest peak in the world.

The **Tanggula Mountains** lie across the heart of the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau along Tibet's northern reaches, forming its border with Qinghai. The Qinghai-Tibet Highway has to cross them, which it does at the Tanggula Pass at 5,267 metres above sea-level, the highest point on the road and often blocked by snow. At its eastern end the range swings round to form the Hengduan Range.

The **Kunlun Range** in the northwest divides Tibet and Xinjiang. Both the Kunlun and the Karakoram branch off from the Pamirs in Afghanistan's Hindu Kush. The Kunlun Range runs for 2,500 kilometres across Tibet and Qinghai and into north-western Sichuan, with an average width of 150 kilometres and an average altitude of 5,500 metres above sea-level. In Qinghai, it divides into three smaller ranges, one of them, the Bayan Har, separating the upper courses of the Yangtse and the Huanghe (Yellow River).

The **Hengduan Range** lies in the extreme southeast of Tibet on the fringes of the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau and continues through into northwestern Yunnan. Its height declines gradually from north to south, from around 5,000 metres to 4,000 metres, and it is characterized by a series of deep river trenches formed by some of Asia's most important rivers (see CHINA TOURISM no. 108).

... and Climatic Extremes

There is a popular saying in Tibet that you need to take four seasons' clothes with you for a single day! Indeed, the vagaries of the climate are such that it is difficult to do them brief justice.

In January, the coldest place in Tibet is the northern Qiangtang Plateau where the average temperature is below -16°C. The equivalent temperature in eastern and southern Tibet is -10°C, softening to -5°C in the eastern part of the Yarlung Valley. Downstream of Zêtang the temperature remains above freezing point in January, while in Tibet's southeasternmost tip around Mêdog, where the altitude is only some 1,000 metres above sea-level, it is over 10°C.

Even in mid-summer — in other words, July — Tibet is not exactly warm all over. It is only 8°C in the north of the Qiangtang Plateau, while in the mountains it is of course very much colder. In fact, it has been calculated that the average July temperature on the summit of Mount Qomolangma (Everest) is around -19°C!

Average Climatic Conditions in Tibet

		Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
Lhasa	Temperature (°C)	-2.3	1.1	4.5	8.3	12.3	15.4	15.1	14.3	12.7	8.2	2.3	-1.7
	Rainfall (mm)	0.2	0.5	1.5	5.4	25.4	77.1	129.5	138.7	56.3	7.9	1.6	0.5
Qamdo	Temperature (°C)	-2.6	0.5	4.3	8.3	12.2	14.9	16.1	15.3	13.0	8.2	2.3	-2.1
	Rainfall (mm)	1.6	3.8	6.8	14.9	45.7	90.3	106.0	101.4	72.2	29.4	3.6	2.1
Gar	Temperature (°C)	-12.0	-9.4	-5.8	-0.6	3.1	10.2	13.6	13.0	8.9	-0.3	-7.1	-11.4
	Rainfall (mm)	1.7	1.5	2.8	1.0	0.7	0.9	16.7	28.0	4.3	1.3	0.2	1.4

However, the sunlight at Tibetan altitudes is incredibly intense, so one must guard against sunburn regardless of temperature. Lhasa's concentration of solar radiation is among the highest in China but the figure is even higher in the upper and middle reaches of the Yarlung Zangbo and in Ngari District in the far west of the region. As a matter of interest, the highest surface temperature ever recorded was on 26 June 1961, with 77.3°C in Qamdo, 76.5° in Zêtang.

Rainfall varies greatly. The lower reaches of the River Yarlung Zangbo where Tibet borders on Burma and India receive over 4,500 millimetres a year, with over 180 rainy days. Around the river's Big Bend above Mêdog the annual rainfall eases to around 900 millimetres. These figures decrease dramatically as one moves further west and north. The Yarlung Valley between Lhasa and Xigazê receives around 445 millimetres, with 80 to 100 rainy days. Gêzê in eastern Ngari District receives an annual 166 millimetres with around 50 rainy days but Gar, much closer to the western border, has only 61 millimetres of rain and 33 rainy days a year! North of Lake Bangong, en route to the deserts of Xinjiang, less than 50 millimetres of rain per year are recorded.

In Qamdo District most of the rain falls between June and September, in Lhasa and Xigazê from late June to early September, while in the west — in Gêzê and Gar — the little rain that falls, falls in July and August. In Lhasa, during this period, clouds usually begin to gather towards evening. Starting around nine, it can often rain all night only to cease after dawn and produce a fine sunny day, continuing with this cycle for several days at a time.

Tourists reaching Tibet by the currently most common route, in other words, by air to Lhasa from Chengdu in the Sichuan Basin, should remember that they are moving from an altitude of 506 metres to 3,658 metres above sea-level. The air in Lhasa is thin, containing only 64% of the oxygen found at sea-level. Some people may experience headaches, nausea, lethargy and insomnia, symptoms of altitude sickness, but a good night's rest is usually enough to overcome these feelings of discomfort. It is advisable not to undertake anything too strenuous on the first day in Lhasa.

Key People and Events in Tibet's History

Time and time again in our Special Features articles this month we refer to historical figures of extreme importance in the development of Tibet, particularly in the religious field with which Tibet's culture is so closely interlinked. The following is a brief chronological summary which we hope will clarify matters and put events into perspective. Please note that dates vary (sometimes considerably) from source to source.

c.300 King Thothori Nyantsan, based in the Yarlung Valley, obtains a Buddhist scripture, the very first record of Buddhism entering Tibet.

633 Songtsan Gambo (reign dates 629–650) formally moves the Tubo capital to Lhasa. An intelligent statesman, he sends scholars to India to study Sanskrit and devises a Tibetan script. He expands Tubo's territory, but also forges links with neighbouring powers by marrying princesses from Nepal and China.

641 Princess Wencheng, a devout Buddhist, daughter of Emperor Taizong of the Tang dynasty, arrives in Tibet as the bride of Songtsan Gambo.

648 The Jokhang Temple is built in Lhasa to house the statue of Sakyamuni brought as part of the princess's dowry.

710 Tride Tsugtsen (reign dates 704–755) marries the Chinese princess Jincheng during the reign of Emperor Zhongzong of the Tang dynasty.

779 The first Buddhist monastery is established at Samye, near Zêtang, by Padmasambhava, an Indian master of Tantric Buddhism whose doctrinal writings formed the basis of the teachings of the Nyingmapa Sect. (Mindrolling Monastery south of Lhasa, founded in 1767, was one of this sect's leading monasteries.)

791 Buddhism is recognized as the state religion by King Trisung Detsan (reign dates 755–797).

845 Assassination of King Lang Darma (reign dates c. 841–845) by a Buddhist monk as a consequence of his cruel persecution of Buddhists. With his death, civil war breaks out and the Tubo Kingdom disintegrates, with power reverting to feudal nobles, mainly followers of the old indigenous Bon faith.

978 Rinchen Songpo (958–1055), later renowned as a translator, returns from

study in India and sets up monasteries at Toling and Tsaparang under the patronage of the kingdom of Guge in western Tibet.

1042 Arrival of the Indian scholar Atisa (982–1054) at Toling Monastery. A major force for the revival of Buddhism in Tibet, Atisa strengthens monastic traditions and discipline, but also accepts Tantric practices. In 1044 he continues to central Tibet and founds the Kadampa Sect, laying the foundations for the later Gelugpa Sect.

1060 The Kagyupa Sect is founded by Marpa (1012–1098), a native of southern Tibet. He too studied Tantric doctrines in India and translated sacred writings into Tibetan. Marpa's most famous disciple was Milarepa (1040–1123), practitioner of black magic, hermit, mystic poet and creator of the *Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa*.

1073 Sakya Monastery is founded by the lords of Zang or Back Tibet, giving rise to the Sakyapa Sect.

1244 Meeting of fourth abbot of Sakya with Genghis Khan's grandson at Liangzhou (present-day Wuwei in Gansu Province). Tibet becomes a vassal of the Khanate, but the Mongols invade it in 1252–1253.

1260 Kublai Khan, the future first emperor of the Yuan dynasty, takes the fifth abbot of Sakya, Phagspa, as his spiritual mentor and grants him power over Tibet, effectively making the Sakyapa Sect Tibet's temporal rulers.

1357 Birth (at what is now Ta'er Monastery in Qinghai) of Tsong Khapa, the reformer of Tibetan Buddhism and founder of the Gelugpa or Yellow Sect.

1409 Establishment of Ganden Monastery southeast of Lhasa, the first of the Gelugpa Sect's centres of learning. This was where Tsong Khapa was entombed on his death in 1419, but his stupa and its contents were vandalized during the 'cultural revolution'.

1416 Drepung Monastery founded.

1419 Sera Monastery founded. These three formed the so-called 'pillars of the state', great centres of learning.

1438 Gedun Drub (1391–1474), nephew of Tsong Khapa, becomes abbot of Ganden and thus head of the

Gelugpas (recognized posthumously as the first Dalai Lama).

- 1447 Gedun Drub founds Tashilhunpo Monastery at Xigazê in Back Tibet and becomes its abbot.
- 1543 Birth of Sonam Gyatso, who is given the title of Dalai Lama by Altan Khan (he counts as the third). Rivalry and fighting continues between Back and Front Tibet, held by the Karmapa and Gelugpa Sects respectively.
- 1617 Birth of the fifth Dalai Lama, who restores and enlarges the Potala in Lhasa.
- 1641 Gushri Khan of the Qosot Mongols intercedes, overthrows the forces of Back Tibet and hands overall power to the Dalai Lama. Lhasa again becomes the capital of Tibet. The sixteenth abbot of Tashilhunpo Monastery is given the title Panchen Lama (counts as the fourth). Many Karmapa monasteries are transferred to the Gelugpas.
- 1705 Tibet invaded by the Qosot Mongols who depose the sixth Dalai Lama and enthrone a monk of their choice.
- 1716 The Dzungar Mongols invade Tibet from Xinjiang, killing the Qosot Khan.
- 1720 The Qing dynasty reacts by sending in an army and setting up a garrison. The Qosot Dalai Lama is replaced by the seventh Dalai Lama.
- 1780 Death of the sixth Panchen Lama (born in 1738) in Beijing, the first Tibetan spiritual leader of this title to visit the emperor.
- 1904 Thirteenth Dalai Lama (1876–1933) flees to Mongolia, returning in 1909.
- 1910 Dalai Lama flees to India, returning in 1912.
- 1923 The ninth Panchen Lama (1883–1937) leaves Tibet for interior China.
- 1951 *Agreement of the Central People's Government and the Regional Government of Tibet on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet* is signed on May 23. The People's Liberation Army enters Lhasa on October 26.
- 1959 The present Dalai Lama (the fourteenth, born in 1935) flees from Tibet.
- 1965 Establishment of the Tibetan Autonomous Region.

(Continued from page 38)

Xigazê – Capital of Back Tibet

monks and lamas. It had four Tantric colleges, each with its own abbot, one of whom always served as the prime minister of Back Tibet. Today it counts around six hundred resident monks, apparently the largest number in any monastery in Tibet today, but a far cry from its former glory.

In old Tibet, each and every family was duty bound to send at least one of its sons to become a monk. It has been calculated that, at one time, almost a fifth of male Tibetans belonged to the monkhood. A boy would generally join a monastery at the age of around seven. To celebrate this auspicious event, his parents would give a feast at home and entertain relatives and friends who came to extend their congratulations. The son's long hair was then cut off as a sign that he had severed all temporal ties, the monk who did this acting as his tutor for the rest of his life. To enter the monastery was often the only way to receive an education or achieve any increase in social status, since monasteries were centres of learning, art, literature and medicine, the true repositories of Tibetan culture in all its forms. However, not all monks went on to study with the intention of becoming lamas. Many of them served the community as clerks, craftsmen, cooks, housekeepers or watchmen monks.

Nowadays, each monk at Tashilhunpo has one or two cells to himself in the dormitory, and a set of furniture in Tibetan style. There is also a canteen supplying tea and food. Although the monks rise early and their day is a long round of religious services, debating, sutra-chanting and sundry chores, life is not all work. On a fine day a monk may suspend his other activities to go out and bask in the sun. He may even go to a movie on occasion. Probably the busiest but most exciting days are those leading up to one of the big religious festivals like the three-day display of the giant *thangka* of the Buddha of the Past, Present and Future during the fifth lunar month.

When a monk dies, his body is disposed of by 'celestial burial', like most other Tibetans. In other words, his body is specially prepared by professional body-breakers and exposed for his bones to be picked clean by vultures, ravens and kites. The basis for this practice lies in the scarcity of wood for cremation and the frozen hardness of the ground for much of the year. Only a Living Buddha such as a Dalai or Panchen Lama is entitled to have his remains preserved whole in a stupa.

Translated by Ren Jiazhen

(Continued from page 25)

Cradle of the Tibetans – Lhasa and the South

the Tibetans were hunters and gatherers who lived in tribal groupings on the South Tibetan Plain and that the first agriculture in Tibet developed here.

The experts are divided as to the origin of these early farmers. Some believe they were Qiang people from what are now Gansu and Qinghai. Others say they were of Malay stock, basing this on the present-day physical resemblance. Still others argue that, since the Tibetan language is a member of the Tibeto-Burmese language family, they may have originated in Burma.

Whatever the experts finally decide, even a cursory look at the Shannan countryside today underlines the fertility of the district and indeed of the whole South Tibetan Plain as compared to most of Tibet. From the summit of Mount Gongbori, one can see vast fields crisscrossed by earth ridges and terraces of barley stretching down the Yarlung Valley. The road from Lhasa passes between green, often tree-shaded fields. In some areas there are even apples and lemons growing.

The valley contains other ancient sites worthy of a visit such as the restored castle of Yumbu Lakang, which is situated dramatically on a pinnacle of rock fifteen kilometres south of Zêtang and is said to have been the residence of the kings of Yarlung. Another famous place is Samye Monastery, sixty kilometres upstream of Zêtang, the very first Tibetan monastery (founded in 779 by the Indian Tantric master Padmasambhava).

Translated by Wang Mingjie

Tibet: Past Coverage in CHINA TOURISM

- No.21 Tibet Special (lamaseries and frescoes, Tibetan faces, Tibetan costumes, traditional festivals)
- No.46 Norbu Lingka
- No.49 Qinghai-Tibet Highway
- No.53 Ascent to Tibet Through Yunnan
- No.54 The Sherpas; Tibetan celestial burial
- No.60 Western Tibet: Burang, ruins of Guge
- No.63 Life · Tibetans · Art
- No.65 Tibetan wedding
- No.70 The Lhoba nationality
- No.74 Sichuan-Tibet Special (impressions of western Sichuan and Tibet, festivals, Sichuan-Tibet Highway, new Tibetan paintings)
- No.88 Lhasa's Great Prayer Festival
- No.100 Assault on Xixabangma
- No.107 The Panchen Lama's Last Days
- No.116 Golden Buddha of the Tenth Panchen Lama

NEWS

Adventure Travel by Bus

Mera Travel (an adventure travel specialist) and Citybus of Hong Kong have teamed up with China International Sports Travel to offer an exciting new opportunity to tour the mainland by bus. This is the first time that the Chinese authorities have consented to a cross-province land tour.

In the planning stage since 1987, the project is scheduled to take off at the end of May 1990 when the first of eight new single-deckers will leave with a maximum of forty passengers. This is no hardship tour: the buses are equipped with air-conditioning, comfortable seats, toilets, refreshment units, freezers, television and video.

The first trip will visit Guangzhou, Guilin, Xi'an and Beijing, with detours to minority peoples not normally visited by tour groups. Accommodation will be in three-star hotels for 80% of the time, the rest at campsites. The cost of the 23-day Hong Kong-Beijing trip is set initially at HK\$15,600.

Plans are already afoot for trips further afield, including Beijing-Urumqi, Urumqi-Lhasa, and Hong Kong-Chengdu. The cost for all four trips would be HK\$54,600 and they would take about five months!

A Night in Puyi's Prison?

The former Fushun War Criminals' Prison in Fushun, Liaoning Province, has attracted a lot of attention since the film *The Last Emperor*. Apart from Japanese war criminals, the prison once housed Aisin Gioro Puyi, the last of the Qing emperors, from the end of the Second World War until his special amnesty in 1961.

Puyi's cell and the garden where he worked can be visited. There is also an exhibition of historical photos on the Japanese invasion, the life of Puyi, and his progression from emperor to ordinary citizen. Real enthusiasts can even arrange to spend a night in a cell!

International Contest at Taishan

Mount Taishan north of Tai'an in Shandong Province will host an international 'mountain-climbing' competition this May 22. Sponsored by China International Travel Service and the Tai'an Municipal Government, the competition will offer a men's championship prize of RMB ¥10,000 and a women's equivalent of RMB ¥6,000. The route is ten kilometres long and follows a well-paved path of 6,800 steps up to the mountain's summit at 1,540 metres above sea-level. The competition does not seem to involve mountaineering techniques as such, but a health certificate issued by a competent authority abroad is required for all foreign competitors.

More Karst Cave Finds

A large underground karst system has just come to light in Qiyang County, southern Hunan Province. The largest of the caves measures six kilometres long and it is linked to no less than seventy-three smaller ones. The cave system covers a total area of 3,300 square metres, one cavern is twenty-five metres high, and there are lots of stalactites and stalagmites, with lakes and waterfalls in the vicinity. The local people have already named this the 'Linked Caverns'.

Another recent related discovery consisted of fifty-three karst caves in Chongyi County, Jiangxi Province, on the borders with Guangdong and Hunan. This is said to be one of the largest cave systems so far found in China. The provincial authorities are now raising funds to develop the area as a tourist attraction.

New Air Routes

Shanghai Airlines, established in 1985, launched a new route this March on Wednesdays between Shanghai and Fuzhou, capital of Fujian.

Another new route has been opened up between two important industrial cities: Chongqing in Sichuan and Shenyang, capital of Liaoning. This route is operated by China's Southwestern Aviation Company. The direct flight of 2,035 kilometres takes three hours.

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TEXT
S U E

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Silk Road in China's Southwest
From Chengdu to Dali —
Retracing the Five-chi Path
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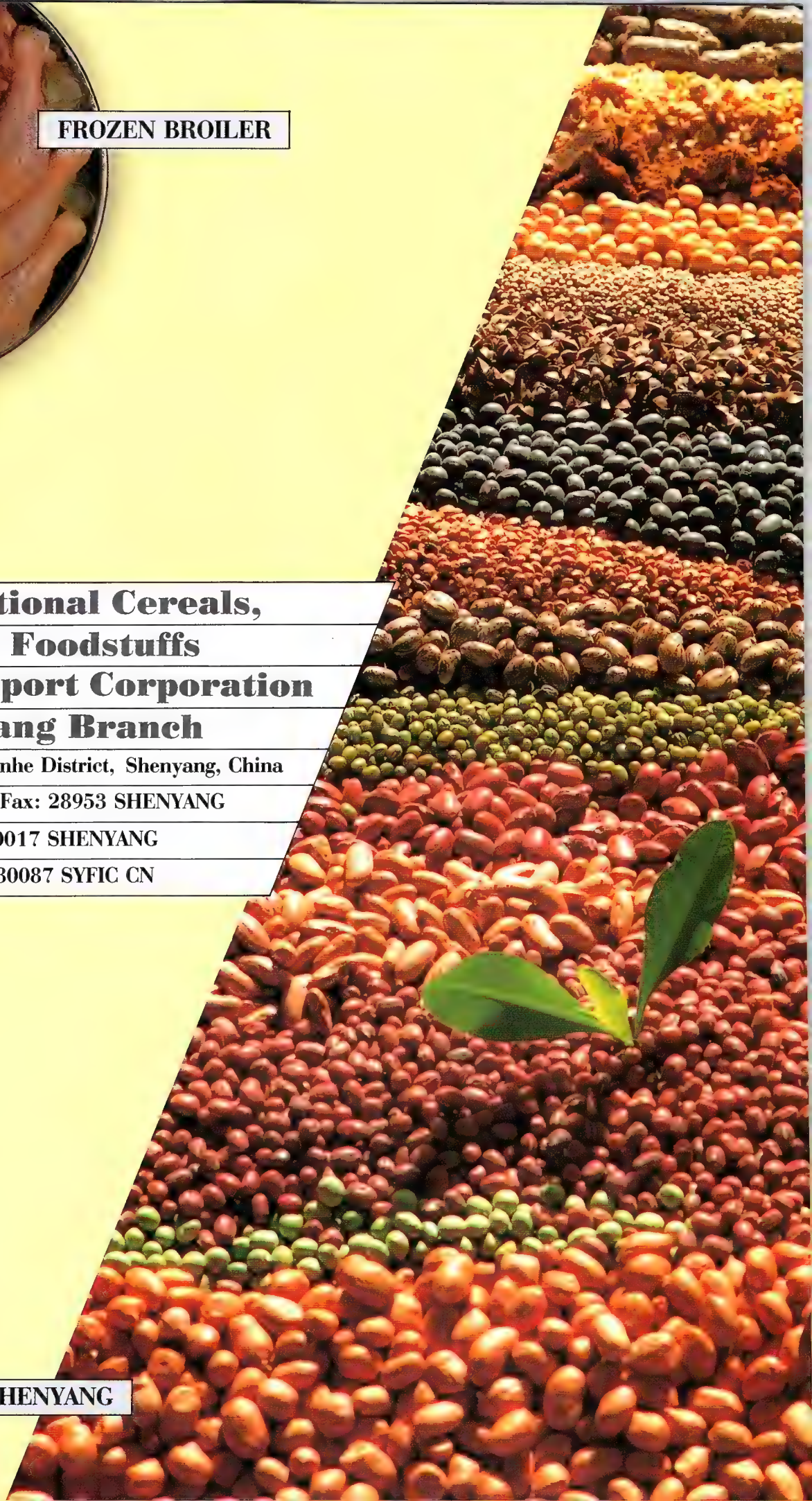
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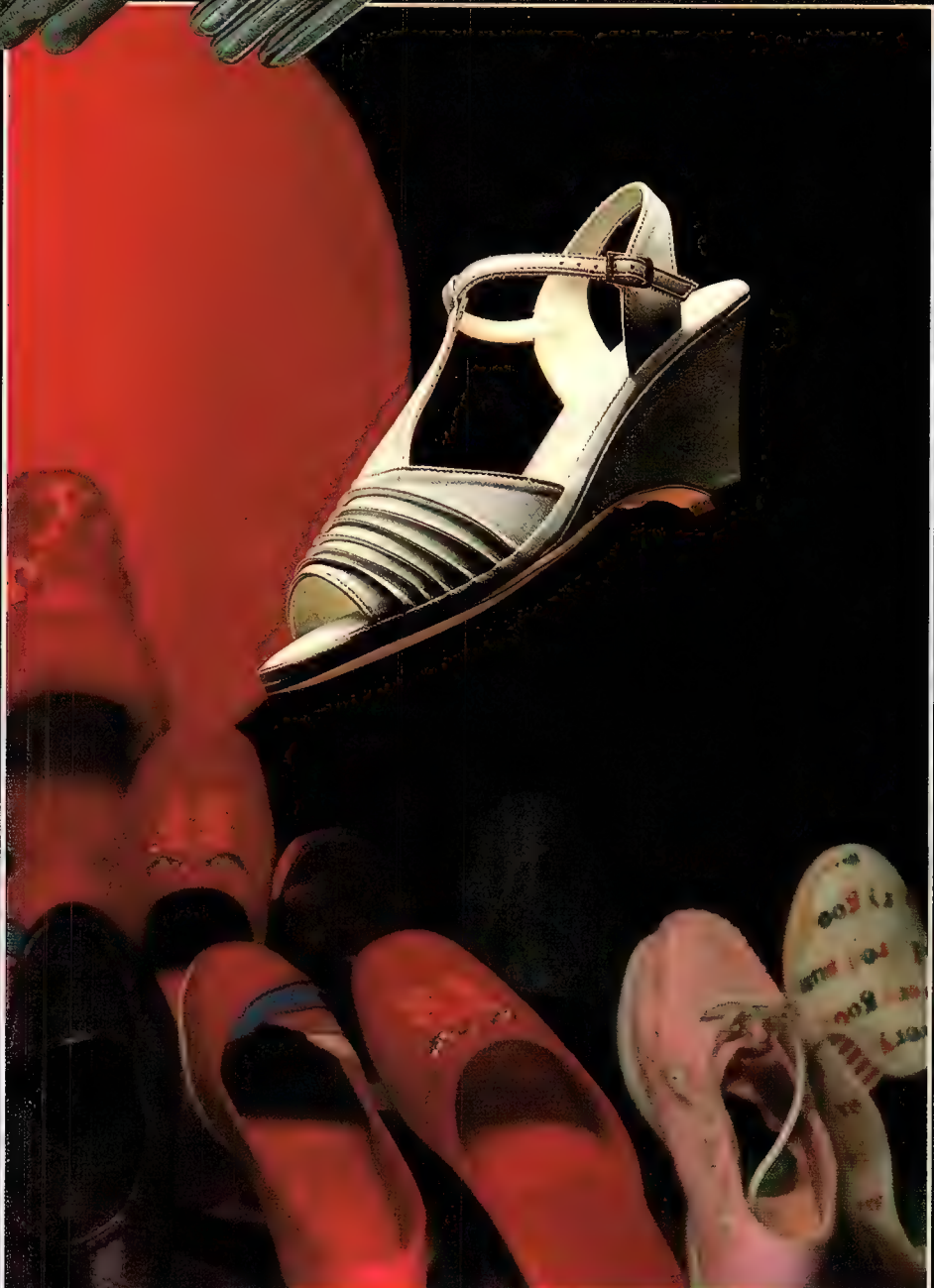
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